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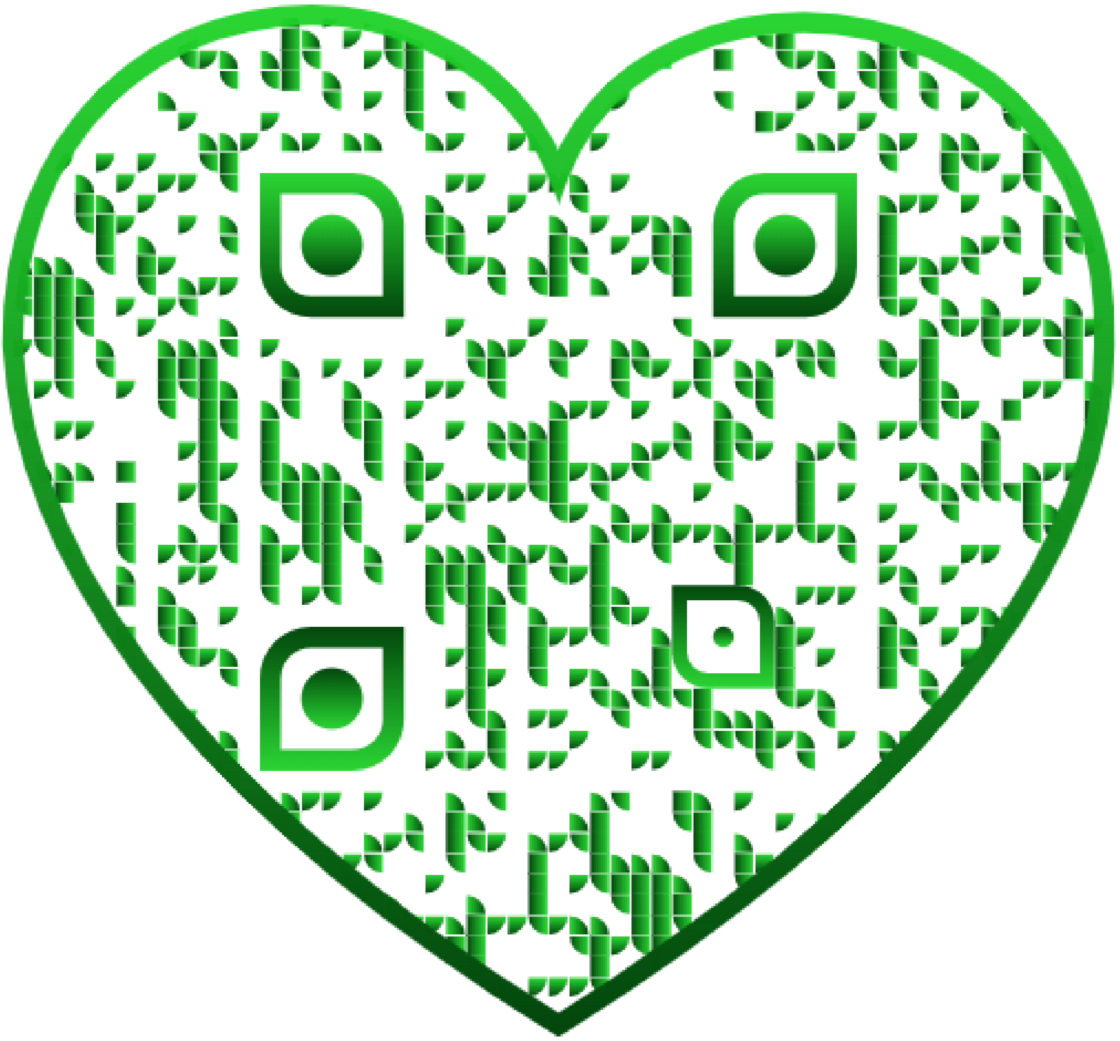

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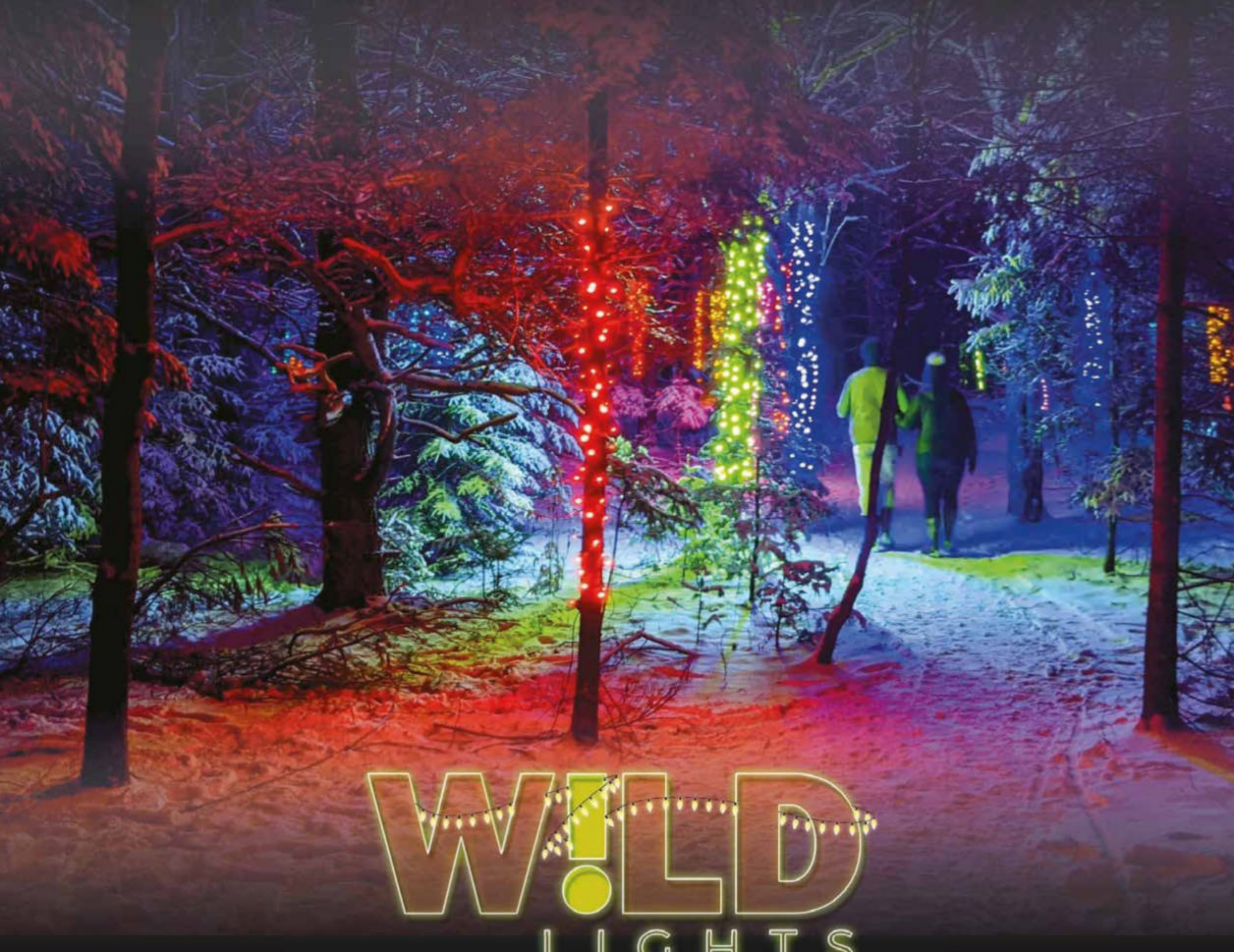

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DRAWING ATTENTION

The illustrations ("Shadow Dancing" and "Natural Attraction") in your October 2025 issue by Gwen Jamison Vogel were outstanding. Sometimes great artists reach out and grab you with their pictures and Vogel does that. What a talent!

Joe Glisson
Jamesville, New York

DECK THE WALLS

Congratulations to the Walls Between Waters initiative for adding a splash of color to Ticonderoga (*Northern Lights*, October). Murals and other public art projects are vital to a community's unique identity. They foster creativity and collaboration, beautify the urban landscape and liven up a public space with photo-worthy backdrops that encourage tourism and economic growth. Every blank wall is just a canvas, waiting to be brought to life.

Michael Aaron Gallagher
Syracuse, New York

PLUSES AND MINUSES

I just received the October issue and, as with every issue of *Adirondack Life*, memories of my time there were renewed.

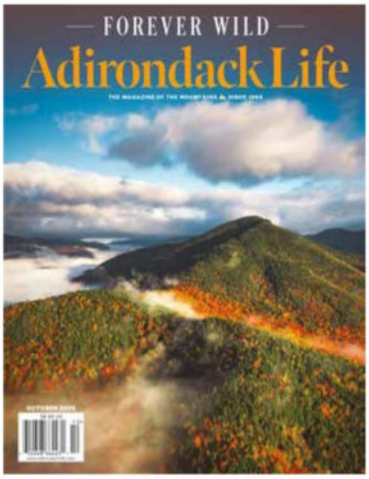
It was interesting to learn that the schools in Elizabethtown and Westport merged and that grades K–5 are now being instructed in Westport ("Addition and Subtraction"). If this had happened back in 1952/53 when I was a fourth- and fifth-grader in E'town, I would have had to commute to Westport even though I lived 50 yards from the school in the adjacent Deer's Head Inn.

I graduated from high school—Mount Assumption Institute in Plattsburgh—in 1958. Some 30 years later that school merged with St. John's to become Seton Catholic School at a new location. The empty Mount building was eventually renovated to serve a useful purpose as affordable housing.

Armin Winfried Braun
Ober Ramstadt, Germany

HOT ISSUE

I just finished reading the August 2025 issue, and it was a tour de force! The coverage of Adirondack forest fires and their history was great, as was the piece about Long Lake's windfall. But the picture of the steamboats, with the profile of Blue Mountain looming in the background, was breathtaking. The story about our favorite Hoss's Country Corner, in Long Lake, was fun to read, too.



Another breathtaking article was "Idem Idyll." I love sailing, and have sailed for over 50 years here at home. The first time we entered Adirondack Experience, in Blue Mountain Lake, and saw the Idem suspended with full sail, it was a marvelous sight. Seeing the other 11 Idems sailing with the St. Regis Yacht Club after 125 years is history in action.

To top it off, "Woods Love" by Ethan Tapper painted a wonderful picture of the worlds that grow from a dead tree.

We treasure the time we spend in the Adirondacks each summer. Thanks for bringing the park to us year-round.

David, Donna and Natalie Bower
Hillsboro, Texas

Adirondack Life welcomes the views of readers. All letters are subject to editing, must be signed and should be addressed to
Box 410, Jay, NY 12941.
Email: letters@adirondacklife.com

Corrections: In Northern Lights (October), stuntwoman Leslie Hoffman wasn't doubling for John Ritter's Love Boat *character, she was executing a scene for his costar. In* Naked Gun, *she performed a stunt with Leslie Nielsen's double and not the star himself.*

Also in that issue, Carl Heilman II's photograph on page 48 is Ivy Island on Lake Luzerne, not Brant Lake.

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Above: Detail of *Pumpkins and Sunflower*

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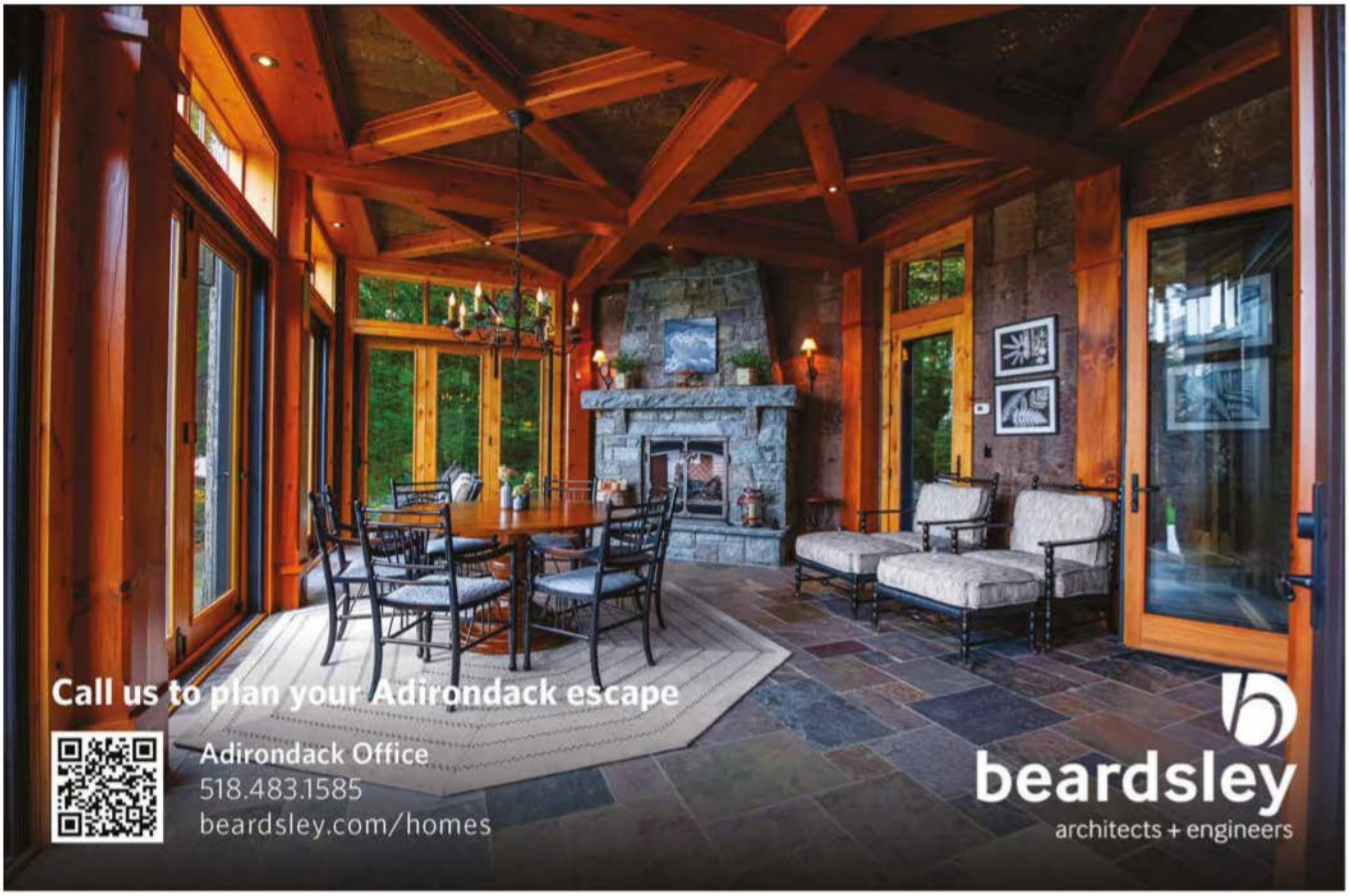

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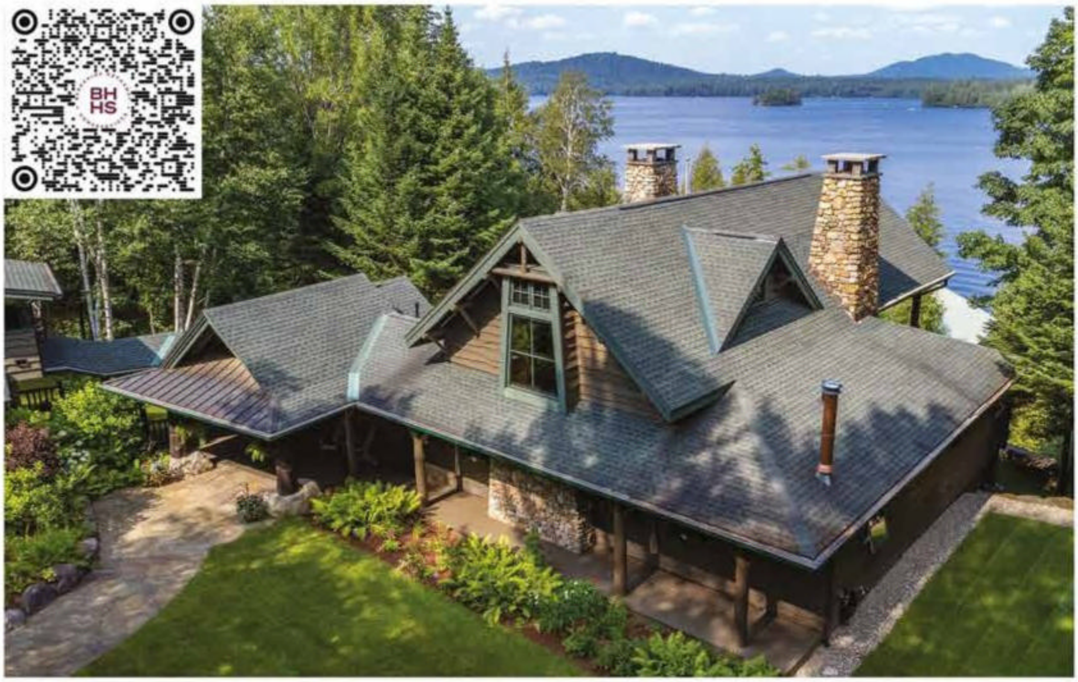

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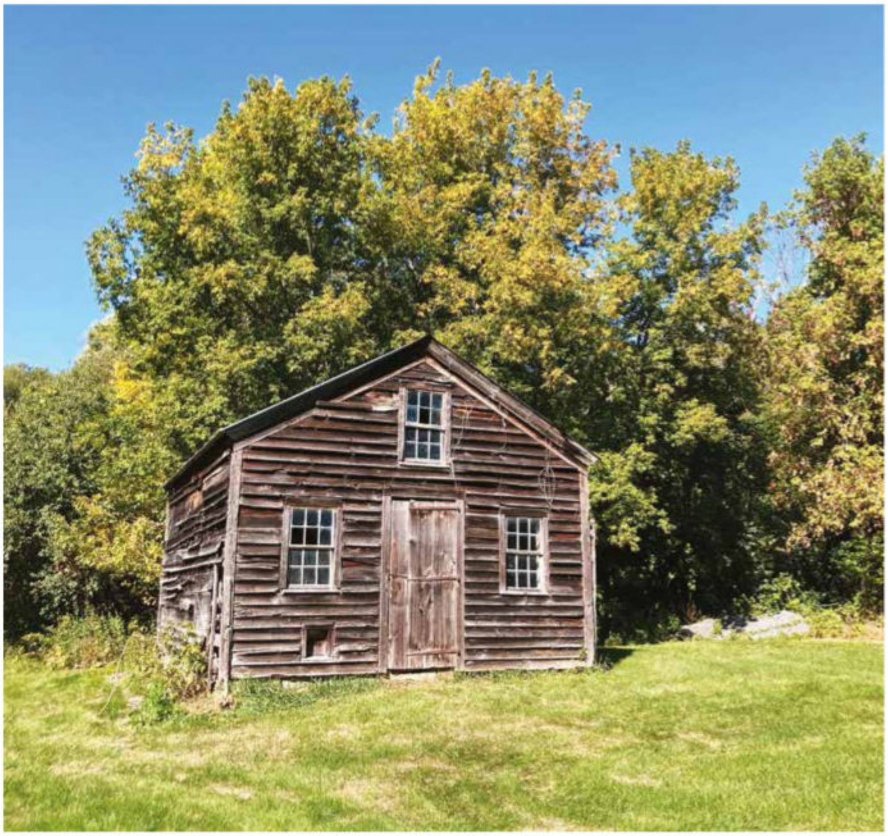
This (Very) Old House

Preserving the Keese family homestead, now and forever

BY ANNIE STOLTIE

Just as George Washington was wrapping up his second term as president of the fledgling United States of America, Richard and Anna Keese and their 11 children lived in a snug, hand-hewn home in what was called the Union. Their community was a Quaker settlement established in the early 1790s, just south of today's Peru. They were among the earliest "Religious Society of Friends" in this country, after being persecuted for their beliefs in England. In Union, they freely practiced their religion, which opposed war and slavery, and they farmed the fertile sweep of land between the then-unnamed mountain range and Lake Champlain.

Richard and Anna Keese's house, built in 1795 in the Union, a Quaker settlement.



1795 KEESE HOUSE PHOTOGRAPH BY ANNIE STOLTIE

When the Keeses first came here they put up a log cabin, long since lost to time. The house was an upgrade, its interior walls whitewashed with lime, a loft above to accommodate many sleeping bodies, and oiled leather stretched tight over window frames to keep out wind and sift in light.

Remarkably, 230 years after Richard drove each hand-forged nail, the house still stands. I've passed it hundreds of times, driving the Harkness Road to and from Plattsburgh. In warm months it's dwarfed by trees and bushes; in winter it pops against a stark landscape, a glimpse of what must have been a sometimes scary frontier. The Quakers braved arctic blasts and epic snowfalls. In those times, I imagine their little house was a safe haven and, when the weather was pleasant, just a place for meals and sleep.

Recently, Ann and Lincoln Sunderland, who've owned the Keese property for more than half a century, let me step inside Richard and Anna's house.

Generations of Keeses repurposed the structure into what the farm required—a henhouse, a place to keep sheep and then a milkhouse, with a well and concrete basin to cool 10-gallon cans of cows' milk after it was collected.

When the Sunderlands moved here, into the adjacent sandstone mansion known as the Keese Homestead, 13 outbuildings remained. (The sandstone house was built by Richard and Anna's son Peter, in 1837.) Through time, Lincoln and Ann did what they could to preserve the historic buildings, the vertical bite of the colonial saws still imprinted on siding and floorboards. Both schoolteachers and history buffs, the Sunderlands respected the Keese family's contributions to the region—neighboring Keeseville was named for Richard, who became a prosperous mill owner and eventually built Anna a much bigger home there.

Lincoln wrote several books about the area's history and has a scholarly command of all things Keese—who was born when, who was married to whom. He gave Keese descendants the original 1792 deed to the land, believing it belonged within that family, but he framed a copy. It captures a time when real-estate transactions were still made in British currency—in this case, 148 pounds and 15 shillings for 425 acres—and property was delineated by "a certain maple sapling, a beech and another beech."

Old trees are plentiful here and Lincoln says there's a maple that's about 350 years old, just a sapling when New England colonists dug their heels in, claiming this part of the world.

Laced with Keese history lessons are reminiscences of Lincoln's early life in Ellenburg Depot, about 25 miles north of here. As he, Ann and I stand in their spacious kitchen and question how Richard and Anna and their 11 kids functioned, even politely—they were Quakers, after all—in such tight quarters, he says, "It must have been fun."

He's serious.

In Ellenburg, Lincoln recalls a family of 16 who lived in a cramped one-room house. "I stayed overnight one time. They only had a couple of beds, so everybody slept here and there. Some outdoors in summer and on the floor and in chairs. That's how it was.

"I was raised in a family of 12 kids. I had nine older brothers and sisters. We didn't have anything, but we didn't think we were poor. Our parents made all the clothes we had. We used each other's shoes, we went to the one-room school barefoot, until wintertime. In summertime we always went barefoot to save the shoes."

When the Sunderland kids weren't in school, they ran the family dairy farm. It must have been hard work, an education in what it takes to live off the land.

Lincoln carried that here, to the old Quaker settlement. He and Ann raised three daughters on the Keese homestead. They had careers and eventually retired, all the while looking after the Keeses' homes and their legacy.

Before I left, Lincoln handed me seven pages of handwritten notes he'd prepared for me. Just so I would know. And so, after he and Ann are gone, someone will remember.

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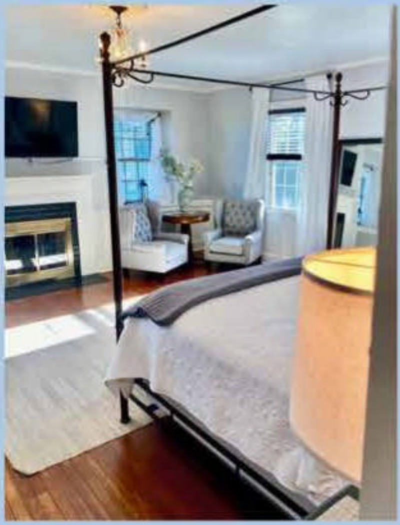

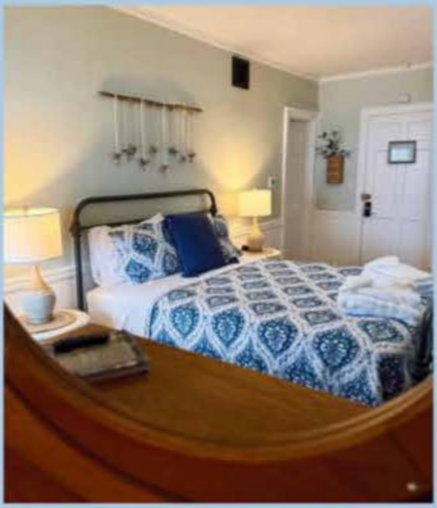

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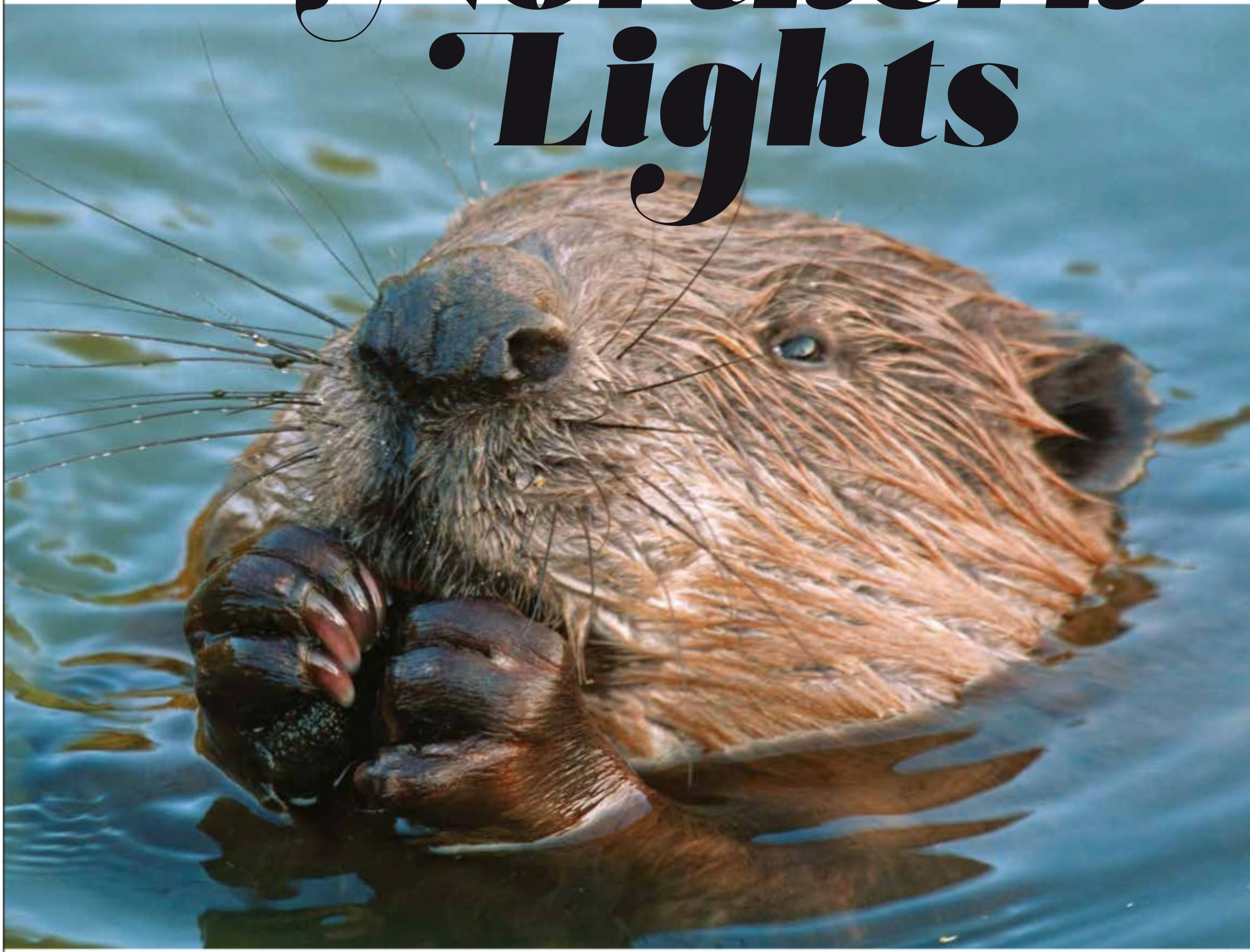
Northern Lights



PHOTOGRAPH FROM ISTOCK

Creature Feature

"I'd seen my share of world-class Adirondack architecture, from Marjorie Post's Topridge to Bill Rockefeller's Camp Wonundra to the magnificent new Lake Placid Lodge, but this was rustic in the extreme. Every structural member in the vaulted ceiling and every ornamental embellishment had been shaped by the carpenter's own teeth."

So begins naturalist Edward Kanze's imagined aquatic tour of a beaver lodge in his latest work, *The Nature of the Place: On the Flora and Fauna of the Adirondacks* (North Country Books, 2025), which takes an equally deep dive into the private lives of other regional beasts, both tiny and strapping, aviators and land-rovers, along with a peek at the rich inner workings of our trees, fruits and flowers. It's a book decades in the making, combining Kanze's familiar folksy tone with a wealth of scientific tidbits and a moral at its core—always take the time to slow down and meet your neighbors.

Find a list of all the latest regional books at www.adirondacklife.com, beginning November 1.

Ski Report

Our snowy seasons have become more unpredictable, but this year brings changes before the first flakes even fall: The International Ski Federation (FIS) World Cup Ski Jumping competition that was scheduled to return to Lake Placid on December 13–14 has been relocated to Germany, due to repairs to an observation deck. The World Cup had only recently returned to the region: in 2023 Lake Placid became the first North American host since 2009, after completing multimillion-dollar upgrades in the lead-up to the World University Games.

In the Nordic arena, Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK) has temporarily closed Cascade Welcome Center—with its 12 kilometers of cross-country-ski and snowshoe trails—while the nonprofit's board decides its fate. "We wanted to take a deep look at how [the center] can be operated more efficiently," ADK's executive director Cortney Worrall told the *Adirondack Daily Enterprise* in August. ADK purchased the popular ski center in 2022 to expand its educational outreach.

Tupper Lake's Beth Joseph Synagogue marked its 120th birthday this summer. The lakeshore house of worship—added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1988—was founded by business leader Mose Ginsberg, who started his career as an itinerant peddler. Though no longer open year-round, Beth Joseph hosts Shabbot services during the summer and Rosh Hashana services each September.

"I come here and feel like I'm getting a hug," synagogue member David Mandelbaum told the *Times of Israel* on the eve of the anniversary.

Meals on Wheels

"Transportation is one of the biggest barriers in our region," says North Country Ministry's executive director Kayla Carlozzi, affecting people who are homebound due to health concerns as well as one-car families juggling their household needs with few nearby options.

So, in October of 2023, the Warren County nonprofit launched its Mobile Mart, a food pantry on wheels. As of July of this year, the van has provided ingredients for the equivalent of 10,530 meals. Visit northcountryministry.org to learn more.

On the Ballot

An amendment to Article 14 of the New York Constitution goes before voters this November that would allow the state-owned Mount Van Hoevenberg sports complex to develop and maintain up to 323 acres of Forest Preserve for training, competitions and supporting infrastructure. In exchange, the state will add 2,500 Adirondack acres to the Forest Preserve elsewhere. The proposed amendment has broad support, with the wilderness advocacy group Protect the Adirondacks! pointing out that it brings the facility into compliance with Article 14 while codifying rules for future management.

MOUNT VAN HOEVENBERG, SYNAGOGUE AND SKI-JUMPING PHOTOGRAPHS BY NANCIE BATTAGLIA. CRÈME BRÛLÉE PHOTOGRAPH FROM ISTOCK

Maple Pumpkin Crème Brûlée

From our April 2002 issue, this classic dessert with an autumn twist is easily prepared with pumpkin puree left over from holiday feasts.

INGREDIENTS:

8 egg yolks
2 cups heavy cream
1 cup pumpkin puree
½ cup maple syrup
¼ cup sugar
2 teaspoons vanilla
½ teaspoon grated nutmeg
½ teaspoon cinnamon
½ cup sugar (for topping)

DIRECTIONS:

Preheat oven to 350°. In a large mixing bowl whisk together egg yolks, cream, pumpkin puree, maple syrup, ¼ cup sugar, vanilla and spices until very smooth. Divide the mixture among 8 6-ounce ramekins or ovenproof cups.

Place cups in shallow baking pan; pour in enough boiling water to rise halfway up the sides of the ramekins. Bake until the edges look set and the center of the custard still moves slightly, approximately 35 minutes.

Remove the ramekins from water and refrigerate until cold, 2 to 3 hours. Bring to room temperature; sprinkle the tops of each cup with sugar and broil 6 inches from broiler or use a pastry torch until caramelized, about 2 minutes; refrigerate again until chilled, about 1 hour.

Can be prepared up to 6 hours ahead. Keep refrigerated until serving.

Serves 8.

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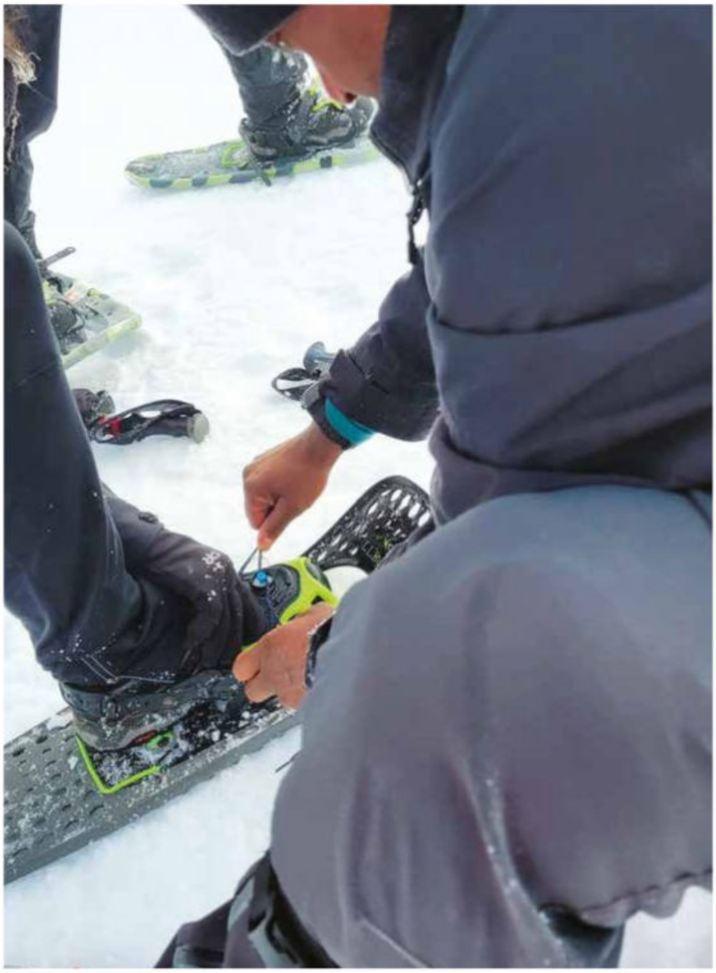

The Shoelace

Stringing together mistakes, triumphs and kindness on the trails

BY RYAN IRWIN

FROM TOP: **The author, left, with his brother on Redfield. Getting a snowshoe "MacGyver'd" on Haystack. The author's daughter atop Gray.**

I was a bad hiker for a long time. On my first outing, I wore sneakers up Big Slide Mountain. I can still see the face of the guy atop the summit that day. "Interesting," was all he had to say. On my second hike, my brother ran out of water on the descent off Algonquin Peak and I convinced him to refill his bottle at the MacIntyre Brook. He got giardia. The following year, we marched past the turnoff to Mount Redfield and Cliff Mountain because we didn't realize that unmarked trails wouldn't have signs. We were approaching Mount Marcy when a stranger helpfully explained that cairns are not just rock piles in the woods. The next year, we camped in a rainstorm near the base of the Seward Range and pitched our tent inside a lean-to because we hadn't educated ourselves on backcountry etiquette. Just after 11 p.m., a guy from Quebec showed up. We didn't need to understand French to grasp our mistake.

Truthfully, I hiked to drink beer with my brother. Growing up, our family had a modest hunting cabin on the Raquette River. The High Peaks felt far away. My brother had started to explore them in his 20s when I was toiling in graduate school, and he liked to pepper me with pictures of himself atop various mountains with a rotating cast of athletic-looking girlfriends. When we started to hike together, we were not aspiring 46ers. Our goal was to end up on a barstool somewhere along Route 73, where we would tell self-deprecating stories about ourselves to ourselves until our neighbors became our friends. My brother has a big, front-facing personality. His voice fills rooms, and 4,000 footers, he insisted, made for the best stories. For reasons we never discussed, we had drifted apart in our 30s, but we'd reconnected in our 40s, when my wife got cancer and his son was diagnosed with a serious learning disability. He

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

would suggest a trip north and I would say yes, always.

Ernest Hemingway once quipped that people go bankrupt slowly and then suddenly, and something similar happened to our partnership in the woods. I'm a little older, and our mistakes bothered me, so I started to study the Adirondacks' rules. Then I began to revise my brother's plans. My earnestness changed the vibe. Also, my wife's cancer went into remission and his son's needs grew. Our relationship with fitness changed. The trip to the Seward Range was our last outing together. Crawling up the final ascent before Seward's summit, my brother noted angrily that I was not as tired as him. He had been unhappy since we began and I was frustrated by his frustration. "Should I feign exhaustion?" I replied dryly. It was the wrong thing to say. He was silent for a while, then he announced he was done for the day. We tried to laugh off our latest setback in Tupper Lake that night, but we had crossed a threshold. When I suggested that we would finish the range another day, he changed the subject.

I didn't hike again for a long time. After that trip, I went to Dublin to teach until the end of the year. When I got home, I signed up to hike Haystack, Basin and Saddleback with the Albany Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club. I knew my brother wouldn't go, so I didn't ask him to join. The group gathered near Clifton Park before dawn on a Saturday in late January, and as people introduced themselves, a pit hardened in my stomach. Everybody was a 46er; several people were griding the peaks, summiting each mountain during every month of the year. I felt like an impostor. Yet I befriended people and stayed in the middle of the pack. I learned about equipment and nutrition. I could feel a horizon opening. These were the best hikers I had ever met—and we were fully present in each other's company.

Disaster still hit. On a steep section coming off Haystack, the plastic harness that affixed my snowshoe to my boot snapped. We were miles from the Garden parking lot and the snow was incredibly deep. Staring down at my

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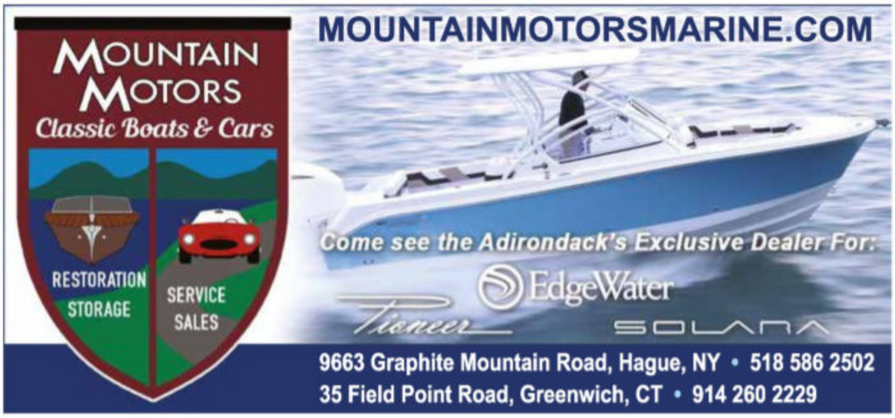

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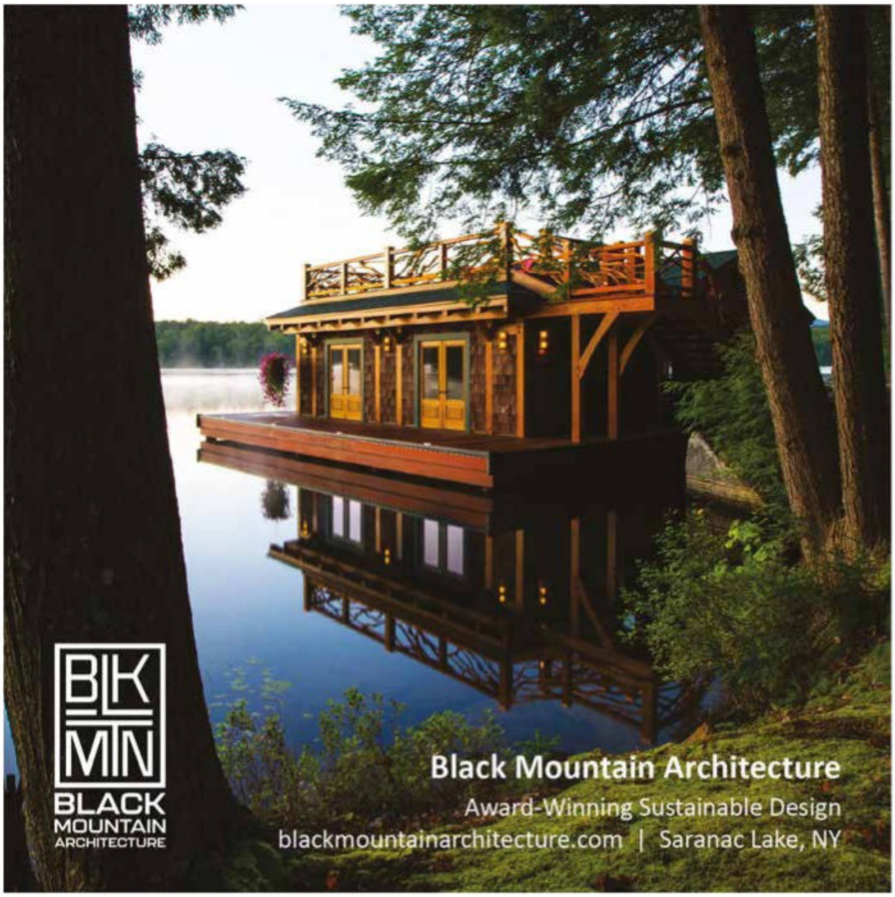
feet, my brain slowly wrapped itself around the seriousness of my situation. Our team leader approached. She did not ask me what I had done. She simply said, "That's broken." Then she removed a shoelace from her backpack. She and another hiker showed me how to tie a knot that reattached my boot to my snowshoe. Atop Basin she pulled me aside to check the knot. "These things happen in the mountains," she said with a warm smile. Her confidence alleviated my anxiety and her competence probably saved my life. Later, as our group clawed its way up the Saddleback Cliffs—the sun setting into a burnt sienna sky—my eyes welled with tears. I had never experienced a more intense moment of human togetherness.

> **The shoelace became my metaphor for preparedness. Then at some point, it took on a second meaning. Trudging through the woods alone, I would rehearse a monologue about how the mountains tied strangers together. Even though hiking is often solitary, the trails are always social places.**

When I got home, I registered as an Aspiring 46er. I also started to carry a shoelace in my backpack. At the start of each new hike, I would try to remember that feeling on Saddleback. The shoelace became my metaphor for preparedness. From my kitchen at home, I would vocalize my choices to my daughter, talking about logistics and what I'd eat to stay energized during the coming day. Eventually, I upgraded my equipment. Weather reports became incredibly interesting. As I got more comfortable in the mountains, I started to pore over topographical maps, too, and I learned how to track my progress on a map with a compass for the first time. I bought a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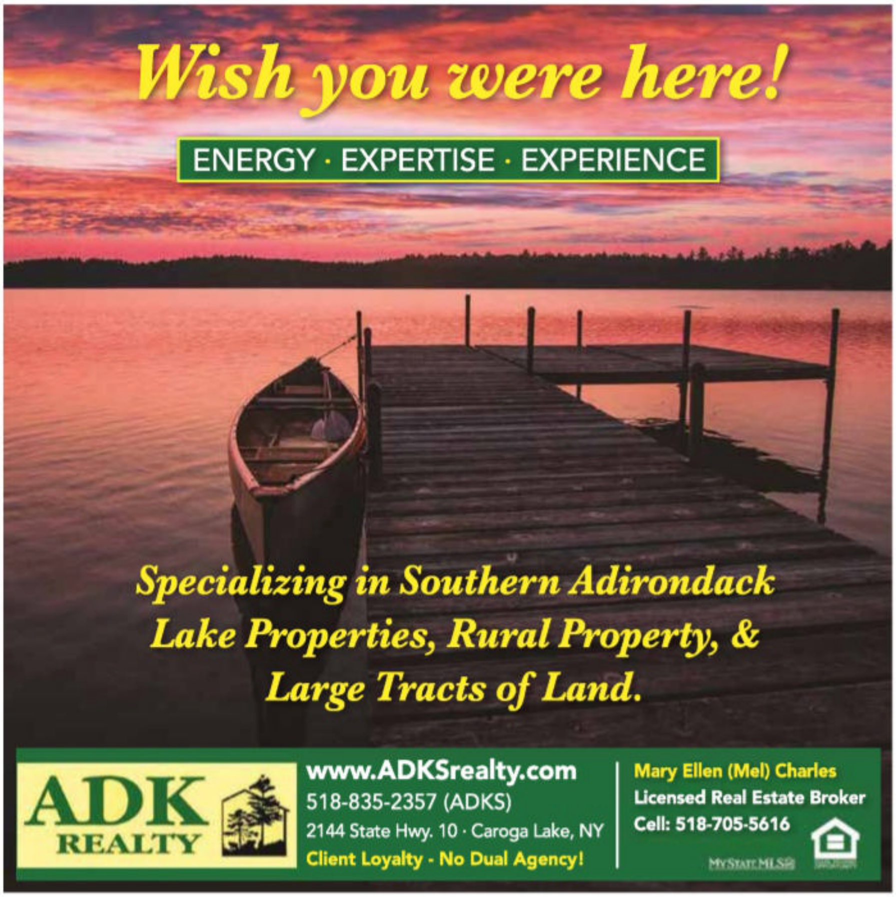
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book about how to tie knots.

At some point, the shoelace took on a second meaning. Trudging through the woods alone, I would rehearse a monologue about how the mountains tied strangers together. Even though hiking is often solitary, the trails are always social places. When I met someone new, I started to let the conversation linger longer, quietly gauging whether that person needed anything more than a smile. (Surely, I reasoned, I wasn't the only nitwit who had walked naively past a cairn.) When I hiked with friends, I started to pack extra snacks and drinks as a summit surprise, and I paid closer attention to peoples' nonverbal cues, adjusting my walking pace so that hard days never became awkward. I developed some jokes for rough moments. I got better at talking people through patches of wet rock and gnarled root. And when the trail flattened, I'd listen and learn and relish the space between me and other people.

Eventually, I became something other than a bad hiker. I think I paid forward that Haystack experience on the Santanoni Range, when my friend injured his knee near Couchsachraga Peak. That was an unexpected setback, but I had packed a spare knee brace and ibuprofen. We slowed our pace and met the setting sun with gallows humor and good conversation. Near Bradley Pond, just before we hit the state trail, the batteries on both our headlamps died. I'd packed extras. And when I close my eyes now and recall that day, I mostly remember the starlit night sky as we walked into the first open field on Santanoni Road. I also remember that we ordered every single item on the Taco Bell menu on the way home and hugged for a long time when we parted ways that night. We've joked about making commemorative T-shirts.

Not long before the end of my 46er journey, my daughter announced the start of hers. When her mom's cancer went into remission, we hiked Phelps Mountain as a family. My daughter was a teenager now, learning to love the High Peaks on her own terms. "I want to be someone who does hard things," she told me atop Armstrong. Gothics loomed in the foreground and Big Slide was visible to the north. I had just told her the story about my first time up Big Slide. A junco fluttered quietly behind us. The morning humidity was a memory and a cloud veiled the summer sun overhead. We were halfway through the perfect day. I gave her a gentle fist bump. Then I removed the shoelace from my backpack. As I unknotted the string, she listened to the speech I had practiced so many times alone. Solemnly, I placed the shoelace in her palms, hoping that the metaphor would feel important.

We sat quietly for a moment. "What about your brother?" she asked. "If the shoelace is a hike then the boot is a mountain, so your metaphor laces kindness to the experiences you have in the woods." She handed back my string. My mouth fell open, and I could feel a retort forming about a child who teases her father because she doesn't have siblings. However, when we locked eyes, she wasn't the person in my mind's eye. She was older. This person saw through me. "Your relationship with your brother is more important than these hikes," she continued. Before she could say more, I pulled her close and voiced my gratitude. My face was over her shoulder. "Are you ready to walk?" I asked. Without waiting for her reply, I dropped to my hands and knees, putting my shoelace back into my pack.

I am 46er #16416. I moved through my journey imperfectly. The beauty of the Adirondack Mountains took my breath away many times. However, my experience was about people I knew and people I met. Sometimes, I ponder my reliability as this story's narrator; I wonder how others understood our days together. Forty-Sixers do hard things, moving from one spot to another, until one day, if we're lucky, we get to tell ourselves that we are a little more experienced than other hikers. That moment—the patch—is earned. Wisdom is another journey. If you've got that map, I'd love a copy.

Ryan Irwin teaches history at the University at Albany–SUNY.

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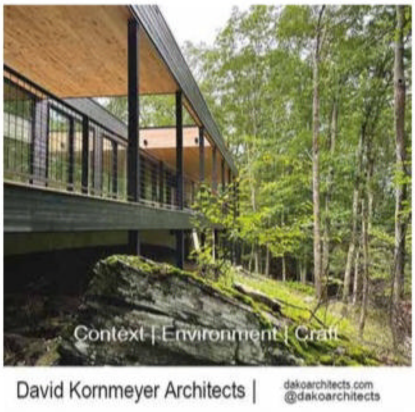
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The Trouble with Heroes

A novel that tackles very hard things

BY LAUREN MCGOVERN

Kate Messner's latest work creates an interactive portal to the world of loss.

Kate Messner said her latest middle-grade novel, *The Trouble with Heroes* (Bloomsbury, 2025), took eight years to write, spilling out of her on the trails and summits of the 46 High Peaks. The voice of a seventh-grader, Finn Connelly, took shape on those long days full of mosquitoes and mud, sunshine and boulder fields.

Finn is a resentful, isolated kid who's built a fortress around himself since the recent death of his father, a New York City firefighter. One destructive, impulsive act earns a criminal mischief charge that brings him into contact with Kelly Thomas, the daughter of Edna Grace Thomas, a fictionalized version of Grace Hudowalski, the first woman to climb the 46 Adirondack High Peaks and a founding member of the Adirondack 46ers. Hudowalski encouraged aspiring members to document their climbs and she provided personal letters of praise, inspiration and validation of their journeys in response.

Kelly proposes Finn make up for the damage to her mother's gravestone by spending the summer earning the 46er status himself. He won't travel alone in the wilderness; his canine companion is Edna's dog, the drooly, exuberant Seymour, a furry truck pulling the apathetic Finn along. Three adult custodians assigned to help Finn on the hikes lend just enough words of wisdom by drawing on metaphors about climbing and life's twists and turns, guiding with a "talk less, listen more" approach or sparking curiosity for nature's wonders. (Look at the rock growing ferns on its head!)

Long before Finn was born, the image of his father, Noah Connelly, carrying a woman away from the crumbling Twin Towers on 9/11 was captured in a photo seen above the fold and around the world. The iconic image and hero-ness followed Finn throughout his childhood.

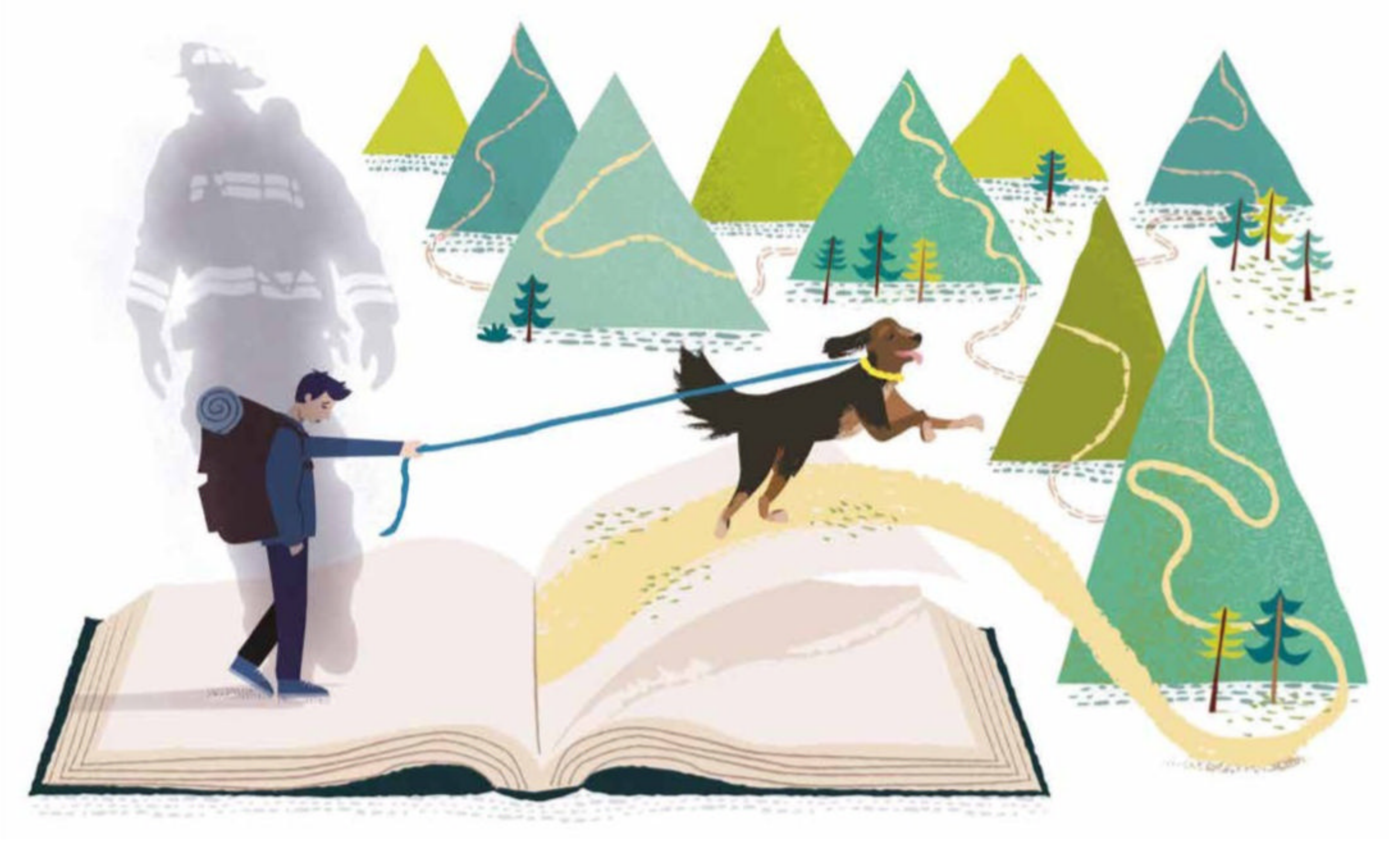

ILLUSTRATION BY GWEN JAMISON VOGEL

It's a constant beat, a loud echo, a thrum under the surface. By the time Finn is in middle school and his English teacher assigns a poetry project devoted to the topic of heroism, Finn is fed up. He owes 20 poems along with 14 physical education classes by the end of the summer or he'll have to repeat seventh grade. For a reluctant poet, Finn drafts a rhythmic, sorrowful excuse for his avoidance:

Why I Skipped Those Gym Classes
Have you ever tried to do cardio
with a busted heart?
Seriously.
Mine is busy
trying to get through the day,
half-crushed under memories
that come pounding in out of nowhere.
That's no kind of shape
to be running the mile.

Messner creates a portal to the world of loss, with a young teen carrying way more than a backpack full of gear. Finn's relationship with his father is revealed through a wide range of poems, navigating memories of love mixed up with a father who struggled with post-traumatic stress disorder, dedicated himself to others during the Covid pandemic, was ready to gobble Finn's homemade snickerdoodles but was weirded-out his kid was wearing an apron. The cookies burn. Finn stuffs the apron in a closet. The relationship is transformed in the woods, where mind-wandering leads to perspective. Connection, forgiveness and softness file down the sharp edge of anger. Finn gets back to baking. He devises new recipes.

I, too, know the knockdown of unexpected loss, the crushing. My younger son, Owen, died by suicide at age 16. He grew up in the Adirondack Park where we hiked Poke-O-Moonshine, Giant, Hurricane, Catamount and so many others along with spending countless scorching summer days swimming in the Ausable or Boquet Rivers, canoeing Oseetah Lake; we skied Whiteface, mountain-biked on trails in our backyard. All in the "before" of our lives. Like Finn, there are times when I don't want to hike—the heat, the bugs, the scram-

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bles, losing sight of the trail markers and feeling panic among the pine trees. I stop and observe, consult a map or my partner (who can read one better than I can). Then I revel in the view from the summit, the expanse of blue sky. I hear a northern flicker. The work pulls me into a healing, comforting place of familiarity and the surprise of what the body can withstand and support.

Messner gives Finn an authentic voice—one middle-school teachers have heard in their classrooms—tired, afraid, anxious, annoyed. And also vibrant, lyrical, creative, funny and innovative. Finn's curiosity speaks to every seventh-grader struggling with the new terrain of grief, how the mundane gets churned up with the heartbreak:

The Weight of Everything
It's a fact
that cremated
human remains weigh about the same
as a sack of sugar or five-pound
bag of flour.
The internet says this
as if it's perfectly okay
to compare staples
from the baking aisle
to the only thing
Left of dad.

It can't be true anyway—
I've held bags of flour before.
They don't feel like this, and
not once
has the weight of sugar sent me
crumbling to the floor.

The Trouble with Heroes is a novel in verse sprinkled with cookie recipes ideal for eating on the trail or for celebrating after a day of blackflies and no view. It features a witty text message on auto-repeat for Finn's mom, tender letters from Edna to Finn's dad, who attempted to complete the 46 High Peaks himself, amusing multiple-choice "quizzes" in choose-your-own-adventure format. These elements lend bursts of interactivity and pull the story together. In the end, Finn realizes he can do hard things.

So can I. You can, too.

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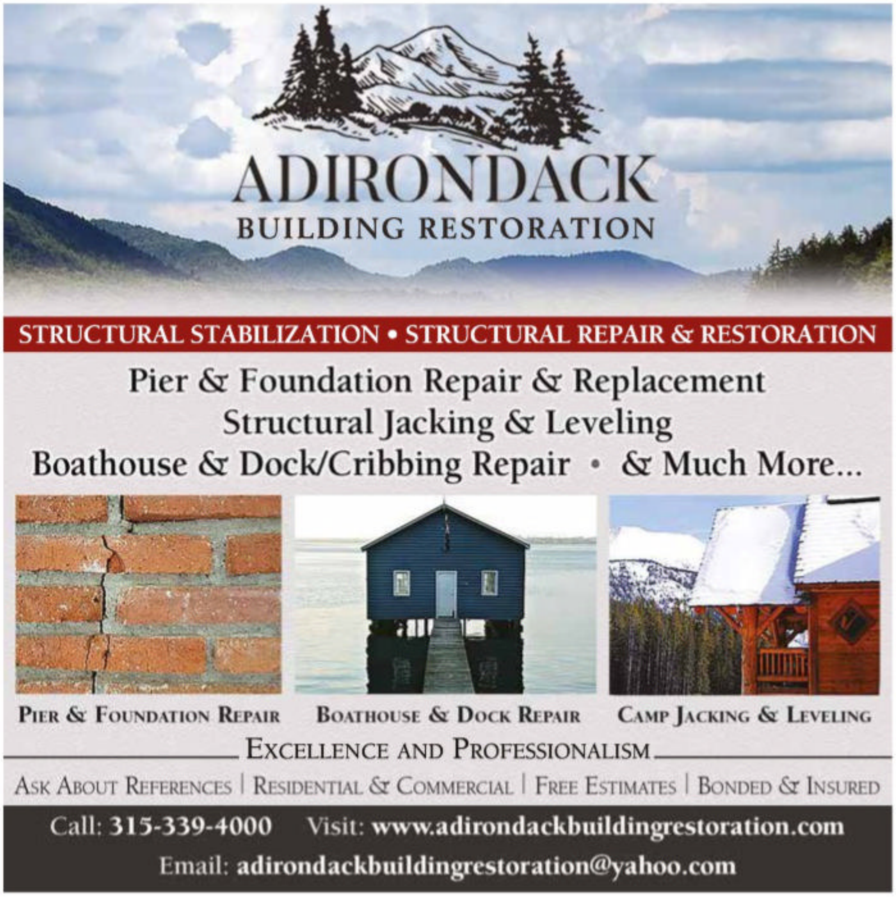
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The Great In-Between

Making the most of shoulder season

BY NIKI KOUROFSKY

The crowds have fled; the last leaves have fallen. Our social calendars stare back at us blankly. The late Betsy Folwell—a driving force at *Adirondack Life* for decades—called this stretch between the tumult of summer and the deep-freeze of winter the best time of the year. The pace of our lives slows as temperatures drop, making more time and space to savor our surroundings.

There are plenty of days left to explore the wilderness—quieter now, with wider views—before we have to strap into our skis or snowshoes, though some adjustments may be necessary. As trekkers share their turf with hunters, pre-hike prep gains a few more steps. Some trails are closed during big-game hunting—such as Swede Mountain, in Hague, and the Rocky Ledges trail, in Essex—so always check season dates (dec.ny.gov) and trail guidelines before heading out. Other must-dos: Dress to be seen in bright orange, red or yellow. Hike midday, avoiding dawn and dusk. Stay on the trail and maintain a steady I'm-a-Human soundtrack as you make your way through the woods.

It's already winter in the highlands, so low is often the way to go for those who aren't ready to embrace the white stuff. Try the Pigeon Lake Wilderness's **Cascade Lake Loop** (5.5 miles), with its 40-foot waterfall, or meander through the diverse habitats of **Silver Lake Bog** (three miles round-trip), in Black Brook.

In Crown Point, near historic Ironville—birthplace of the electromagnet—the Champlain Area Trail System's **Penfield Pond/Old Iron Trail** (1.7 miles) is an easy-going loop that skirts a pretty pond. Find more eastern Adirondack options at www.champlainareatrails.com.

Your favorite ice-cream stand might be shuttered for the year, along with some of the big tourist draws, but it's still easy to find pockets of fun. **The Wild Center** (www.wildcenter.org), in Tupper Lake, stays open weekends through March and offers a **Community Free Day** on November 8 (tickets are complimentary, but should be reserved in advance). Starting November 28, the natural history museum sprinkles its darkened trails with thousands of multicolored lights and adds fireside cocoa and s'mores to the menu.

Fort Ticonderoga (fortticonderoga.org) closes its regular season on October 26, but the pivotal Colonial site continues to host "Winter Quarters" events, including a **Living History Veterans Day** program on November 8, highlighting young draftees during the Revolutionary and Seven Years' Wars. On December 6, as part of America's 250th birthday celebrations, reenactors will commemorate the first leg of **the Noble Train,**

Quieter trails are one of the joys of late fall.

PHOTOGRAPH FROM ISTOCK

when troops hauled 60 tons of cannon through the howling wilderness—from Fort Ticonderoga to Boston—during the winter of 1775–76.

From October 30 to November 2, the **Lake Placid Film Festival** (www.adirondackfilm.org) returns, bringing award-winning international and independent films, plus panels, discussions and short-film showcases.

’Tis the season to pack on the pounds, and you can do it in style at Blue Water Manor’s only-open-in-winter restaurant, The Barrel (www.bluewatermanor.com). The Bolton Landing hot spot kicks off its **outdoor-igloo dining** starting November 1. Come for the short-rib poutine, but stay for a matchup on the ice-less curling “rink.”

Looking for something even sweeter? Barkeater Chocolates (barkeaterchocolates.com), in North Creek, hosts hands-on **Chocolate Making Experiences** on select weekends through November 22. You can run off the calories at one of the region’s Thanksgiving Day **Turkey Trots**, happening in Lake Placid, Saranac Lake, Tupper Lake and Glens Falls. Visit our events calendar at www.adirondacklife.com for details.

Hoary old-man winter won’t be ignored forever, but at least he brings the promise of snow-globe perfect days and tiny towns done up in Hallmark-ready style. Soon the region will overflow with heart-warming holiday festivals, but one of the biggest blowouts happens November 28–30 in Old Forge and Inlet. The twin **Adirondack Christmas on Main Street** celebrations (www.adkchristmasonmain.com) are packed with crafts and cookies, wagon rides and wassailing, along with tree lightings, a kids’ Reindeer Run and visits from the Clauses. In neighboring Thendara, the Adirondack Railroad (adirondackrr.com) conducts its **Santa Train** to Otter Lake and back.

Saranac Lake caps off 2025 during its **North Country New Year** (saranaclake.com) on December 31, overflowing with music, ice skating, a kids’ carnival and hot-chocolate bar, plus fireworks and enough good cheer to keep us smiling through our long winter’s naps.

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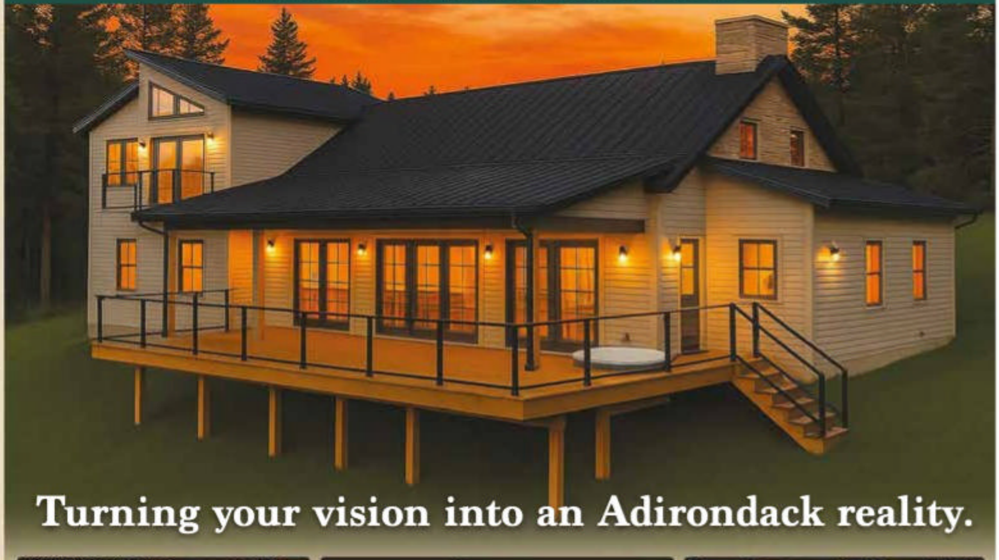

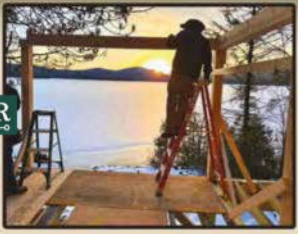

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NOISY NEIGHBORS

What's behind all that raven racket?

A

A FEW YEARS AGO, when we began to live year-round in the Adirondacks, my wife and I heard a group of ravens, screeching up a storm. We thought at first that they might have been arguing over some particularly delicious bit of deer carcass. But the noise went on for days. At high volume. With no loss of intensity. It was like raven Ragnarök. Were they fighting about politics? Arguing philosophy? Was it something we did?

It turned out that fledgling ravens were making the racket and the apparent cause for the hysterics was that they were realizing that they had to start fending for themselves. No teenager refused a ride to the mall could have been more irate. "What do you mean, empty nest?" they cried. Or so I imagined.

by JAMES GORMAN

photographs by PAMELA UNDERHILL KARAZ

QUAINT AND CURIOUS

Ravens are common not only in the Adirondacks, but across the Northern Hemisphere, and in myth, poetry and folklore.

How big are they? Ravens can be two feet tall, weigh more than three pounds, and have a wingspan of close to five feet.

What do they eat? Everything. They are both scavengers and predators. They feed on carcasses of animals in the forest, patrol highways for roadkill, and eat eggs and chicks of other birds, as well as killing and eating adult birds, small mammals, insects, amphibians and reptiles. They also eat berries, grains and garbage.

How to tell them from crows? They are bigger, have a thicker bill, a noticeable neck ruff, and a diamond-shaped tail in flight. They are more often seen singly or in pairs in the Northeast. Their calls are typically deep croaks, not the sharp caw, caw of crows, although they have many vocal expressions.

How smart are they? Really smart. Ravens are known for their complex social interactions, their ability to use tools, like sticks, in foraging, and their problem solving. In some experiments they have performed at the level of great apes or young children.

Odd facts. They love to play among themselves, rolling around in the snow, for example. And they are known to approach dogs and other potential predators from behind and tug on their tails.

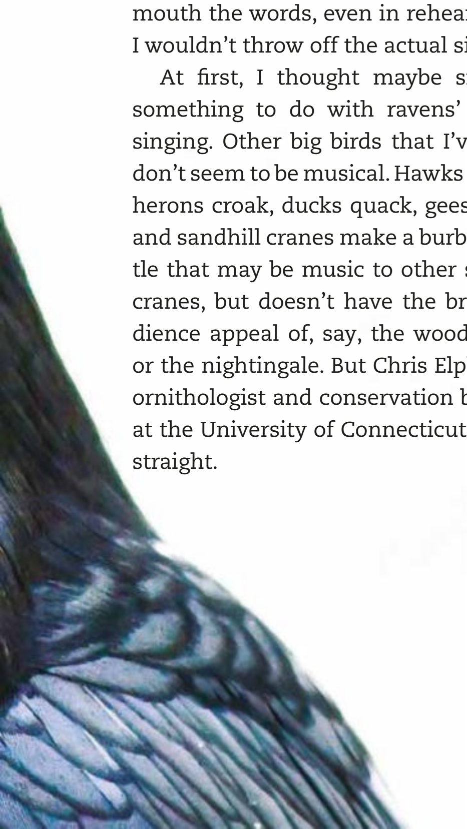
Source:
Cornell Lab of Ornithology's
birdsoftheworld.org

I'm a fan of ravens and I think everyone should be. They're smart, social and two of them, Huggin and Muninn, serve the Norse god Odin by flying around the world acting as his eyes and ears. But I was not a fan of the screeching, which, as Yale ornithologist and evolutionary biologist Richard Prum noted when I asked him about it, "is a competitive entry for one of nature's more annoying sounds." Classic scientific understatement.

The noise was so remarkably different from the melodic trills and tweets we usually hear, using the invaluable bird app Merlin to tell us who is singing, that it made me think about why ravens don't sing. They are remarkably vocal, with quite the vocabulary, according to dedicated observers, but no one would call what they do singing. In this, I feel a commonality with them. I too have a good vocabulary, but can't carry a tune.

Officially, however, ravens are songbirds, which is to say they are in the suborder Passeri. It's a big group with thousands of species, distinguished by having a particularly complex syrinx, the avian equivalent of a human voicebox, which enables intricate birdsong. Similarly, I was officially classified as a member of the St. Justin's choir in elementary school, but they still made me mouth the words, even in rehearsals, so I wouldn't throw off the actual singers.

At first, I thought maybe size had something to do with ravens' lack of singing. Other big birds that I've heard don't seem to be musical. Hawks scream, herons croak, ducks quack, geese honk, and sandhill cranes make a burbling rattle that may be music to other sandhill cranes, but doesn't have the broad audience appeal of, say, the wood thrush or the nightingale. But Chris Elphick, an ornithologist and conservation biologist at the University of Connecticut, set me straight.



He said that he, too, had the impression that larger birds didn't sing. "That is, I did, until I spent a month in Queensland [Australia]." There, he found quite a few crow-sized birds that are musical, for example the pied butcherbird, pied currawong and Australian magpie. You can hear them on the site xeno-canto.org, which has wildlife sounds from around the world. Most songbirds are small, but not all of them. Still, ostriches don't sing, right?

I had a second wrong hypothesis about why ravens don't sing: the smarter the bird (or person), the worse the singing. This is completely self-serving and unscientific and refuted immediately by Taylor Swift, among other business-savvy performers. Really this idea is hardly worth mentioning, except to the tone deaf, it has a nice ring to it.

Another even deeper mystery about bird vocalizations is the way that humans respond to them. We're not that closely related in evolutionary terms. Closer than lobsters, certainly, but not as close as bears or raccoons. And yet we have some of the same sensibilities. Consider how we both appreciate the beauty of birds, in plumage and song.

If it seems a stretch to say that birds appreciate beauty, it's worth considering a book by Richard Prum, *The Evolution of Beauty*, about the role of female birds' aesthetic choices and their influence on evolution. Mainstream evolutionary thought holds that the glory of a bird of paradise or the bright colors of a painted bunting or wood duck are advertisements of health and genetic fitness, signs of a good mate. But Prum argues that when female birds choose mates, they are not just picking up on signs of strength and good health. They are choosing mates with songs and colors that please them, and their perception of beauty drives evolution.

Other ornithologists may disagree—Prum's thinking has not become a new orthodoxy. But it's unarguable that humans enjoy what birds seem to enjoy. We love the sight of glorious plumage and often dress ourselves in it, the musician Bjork being one example. And we are head over heels for birdsong, which has entranced many birders, scientists, musicians and composers. In Wagner's *Siegfried*, for example, there are birdsong motifs and the hero understands birdsong after tasting dragon's blood.

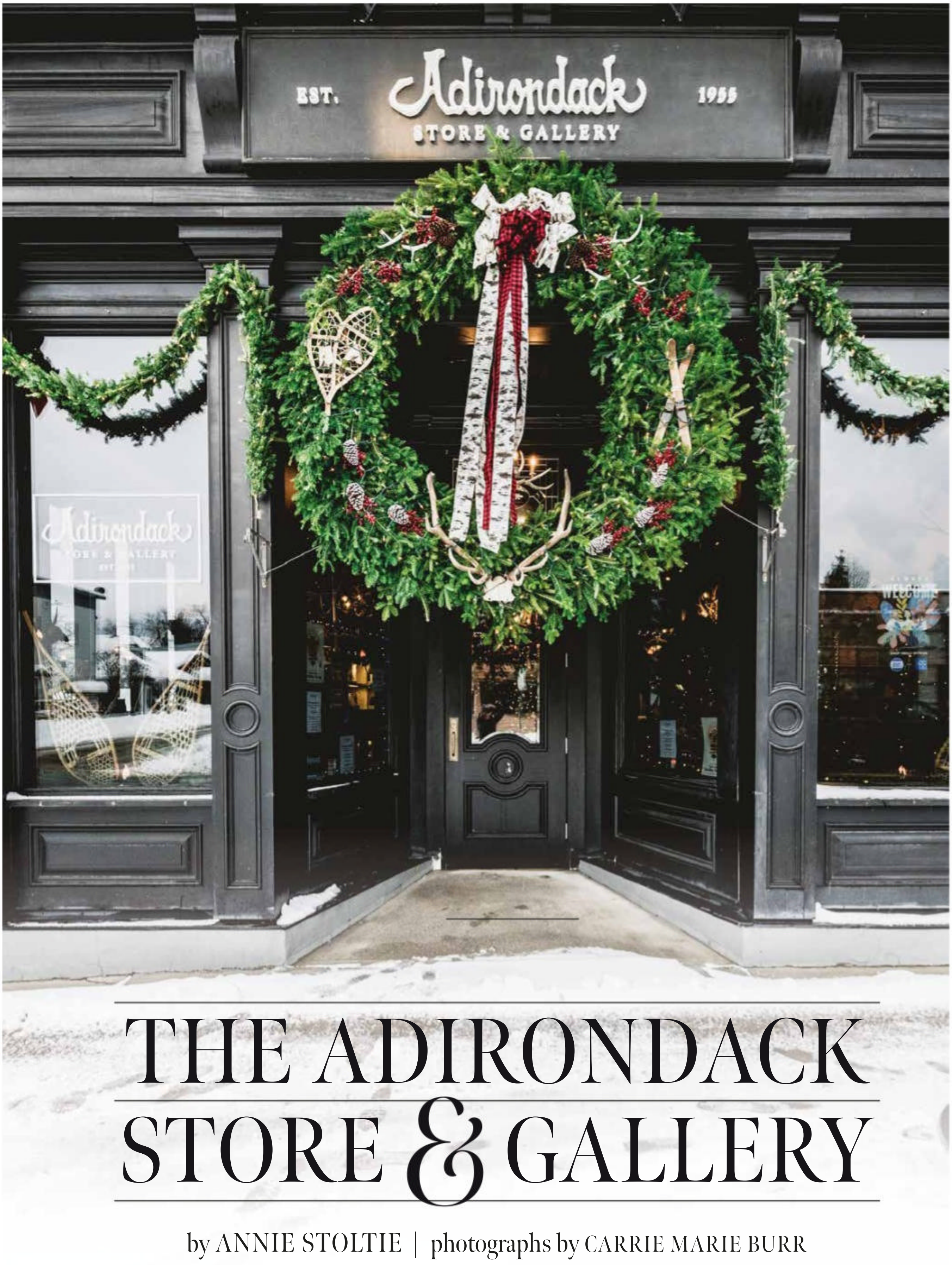
I'm not comparing myself to Siegfried. For one thing, he's a tenor. And I'm, well, no one has listened to me sing long enough to say. But I also understand some bird vocalizations, specifically the fledgling racket. And I suspect that the parent ravens and I have the same reaction. I can't prove it, but I bet that if you could read a raven parent's mind during the annual fledgling opera, it would be thinking, *Give me a break*. Maybe it's not just a sense of beauty we share with birds, but a sense of irritation too.

I'm thinking of trying to make friends with the neighborhood ravens by offering occasional snacks. Then, when the fledglings start squawking next year, I could help out. I could offer them a sandwich, or the equivalent species-appropriate food approved by the national bird ethics authorities.

I haven't done this yet. But I did take the initial step of asking Chris Elphick (who, I hasten to add, is not an official bird ethics official) about the advisability of befriending ravens. His response was encouraging. He said that if the ravens were willing, he didn't see a problem.

"In general," he said, "I think they're smart enough to be trusted with their own choices."

James Gorman is a former reporter and editor at *The New York Times.* He wrote "On the Rocks," about Adirondack geology, in the October 2025 issue.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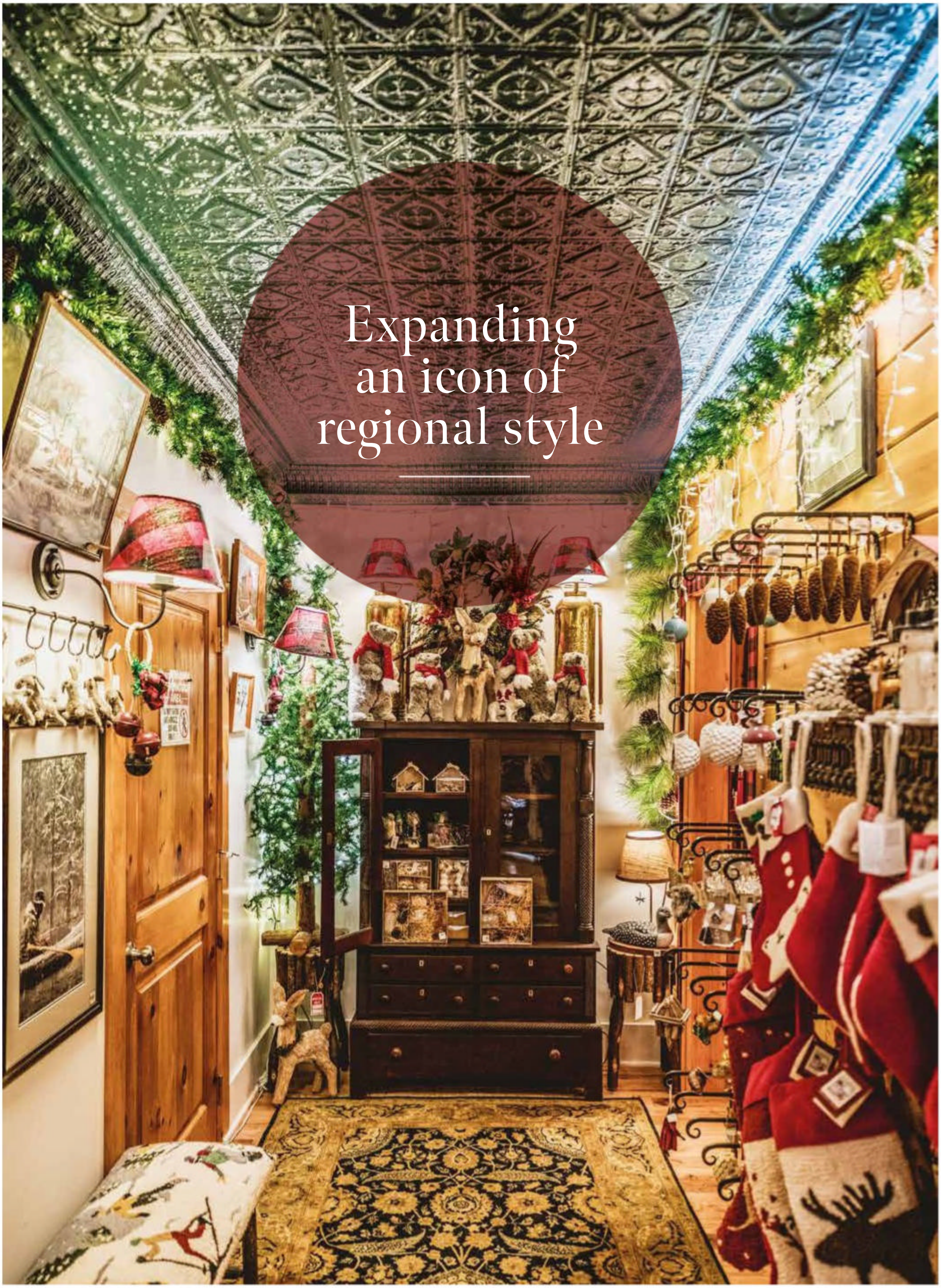
Adirondack
1955
STORE & GALLERY

THE ADIRONDACK STORE & GALLERY

by ANNIE STOLTIE | photographs by CARRIE MARIE BURR



Expanding an icon of regional style

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FIFTY-FIVE YEARS AGO Tad and Linda Sturgis's Adirondack Store was featured in the winter issue of *Adirondack Life*. By then, the couple's emporium had been thriving for more than a decade. What first started as a Saranac Lake–based mail-order business had morphed into a showroom in Saranac Lake and, later, a log cabin in Ray Brook. In the very beginning the hot seller was the "Adirondack Firefork," an iron-and-hardwood tool crafted by an artisan in Minerva. The Sturgises sold thousands. From there, inventory expanded to anything that "relates to the Adirondacks, the out-of-doors, campers, sportsmen, nature-lovers," according to the article.

Today, that's still the case. Inside the Adirondack Store & Gallery, the flagship boutique now along Route 86 in Lake Placid, you'll find glassware, taxidermy, flannel shirts, furniture, rugs, chandeliers and more exhibited room after room, in antique hutches, along walls and dangling from ceilings. You can expect the same at the Adirondack Store in Tupper Lake, though the building's soaring tin ceilings are just as stunning as the merchandise.

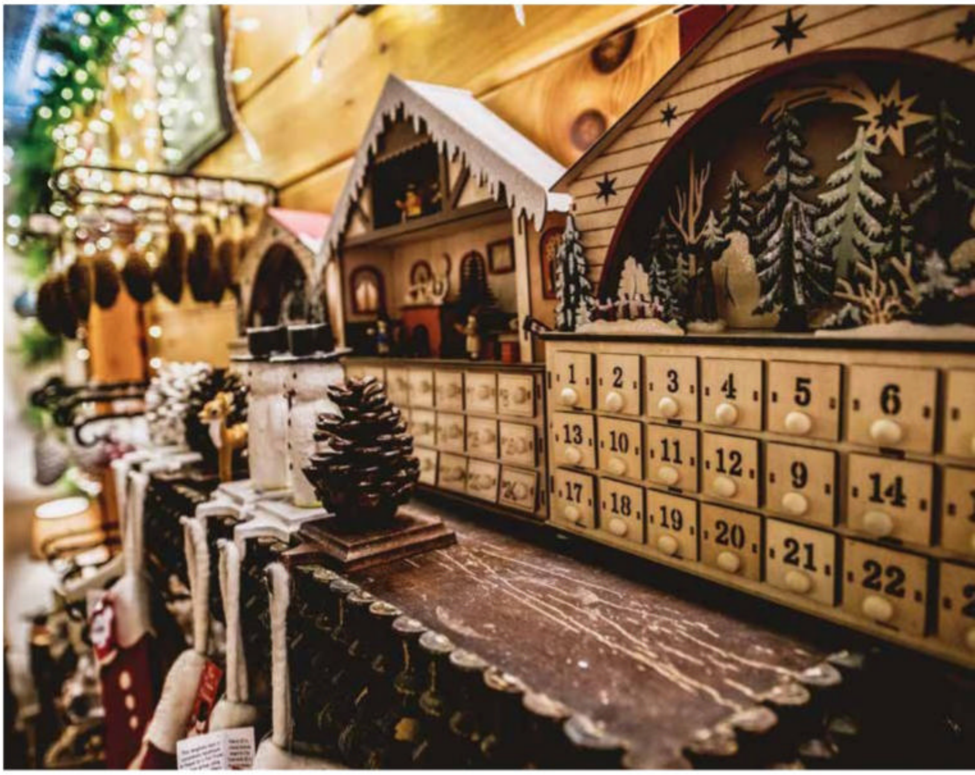
Decades after the Sturgises mailed out the first Adirondack Firefork, their brand has expanded in the hands of Christopher English and Stephen Dori Shin, who bought the Lake Placid store in 2016. On English's desk is a copy of that 1970 issue of *Adirondack Life* celebrating Tad and Linda. That the iconic store is again inside the magazine "is wonderful," says English. "We're still relevant after all these years."

English is a longtime Adirondacker. His grandfather Monroe Gladd made his mark in Saranac Lake in the early 20th century, running a variety of businesses, including Nash, Datsun and Lincoln, and Ford car dealerships. Gladd's eight kids mostly stayed in the area, continuing their dad's legacy, but English's mother, Elizabeth, married Charles English, a Paul Smith's College graduate, and eventually settled in Connecticut. Still, summers meant a return to the Adirondacks for English. At the family camp in Franklin Falls, he grew up surrounded by nature and the region's tight-knit communities. What followed were decades of working in retail sales in Boston, managing department stores like Lord & Taylor and Filene's, all the while working as an antiques dealer.

In 2009 English and Dori Shin—a retired ballet dancer—bought a house in Rainbow Lake and moved there permanently. Soon after, they opened Antediluvian Antiques & Curiosities, in Lake Placid. A couple of years later, while at a cocktail party, they heard that the Adirondack Store was closing and the property was for sale. The next day they put a contract on it.

"I realized two things," says English.

All three of the Adirondack Stores sell new, vintage and antique products and furniture and offer interior-design services. The photographs in these pages were taken at the store in Tupper Lake.



Adirondack Store owners Stephen Dori Shin and Christopher English.

Find store locations, hours, products and more at adkstore.com

STORE OWNERS PHOTOGRAPH BY JORDAN CRAIG

"That the Adirondack Store is iconic and we need to preserve our traditional businesses for the integrity of this place. I'm not the type of person who wants to see the Adirondacks filled with chain stores."

English and Dori Shin renovated the building, closing Antediluvian to channel their time and resources into the store. Then, in 2019, confident in the Adirondack Store brand, they bought the old Ginsberg's Department Store building on the corner of Park Street and Cliff Avenue, in Tupper Lake, leaning into the wave of excitement about the recreational and business possibilities in that lumber town.

The store in Tupper has the same eclectic vibe as the one in Lake Placid, echoing English's love of vintage, antiques, Americana and Adirondackana—and whimsy. "People shouldn't take themselves too seriously," he says. (During the holidays, the showroom's stuffed foxes and deer heads wear cheerful scarves.)

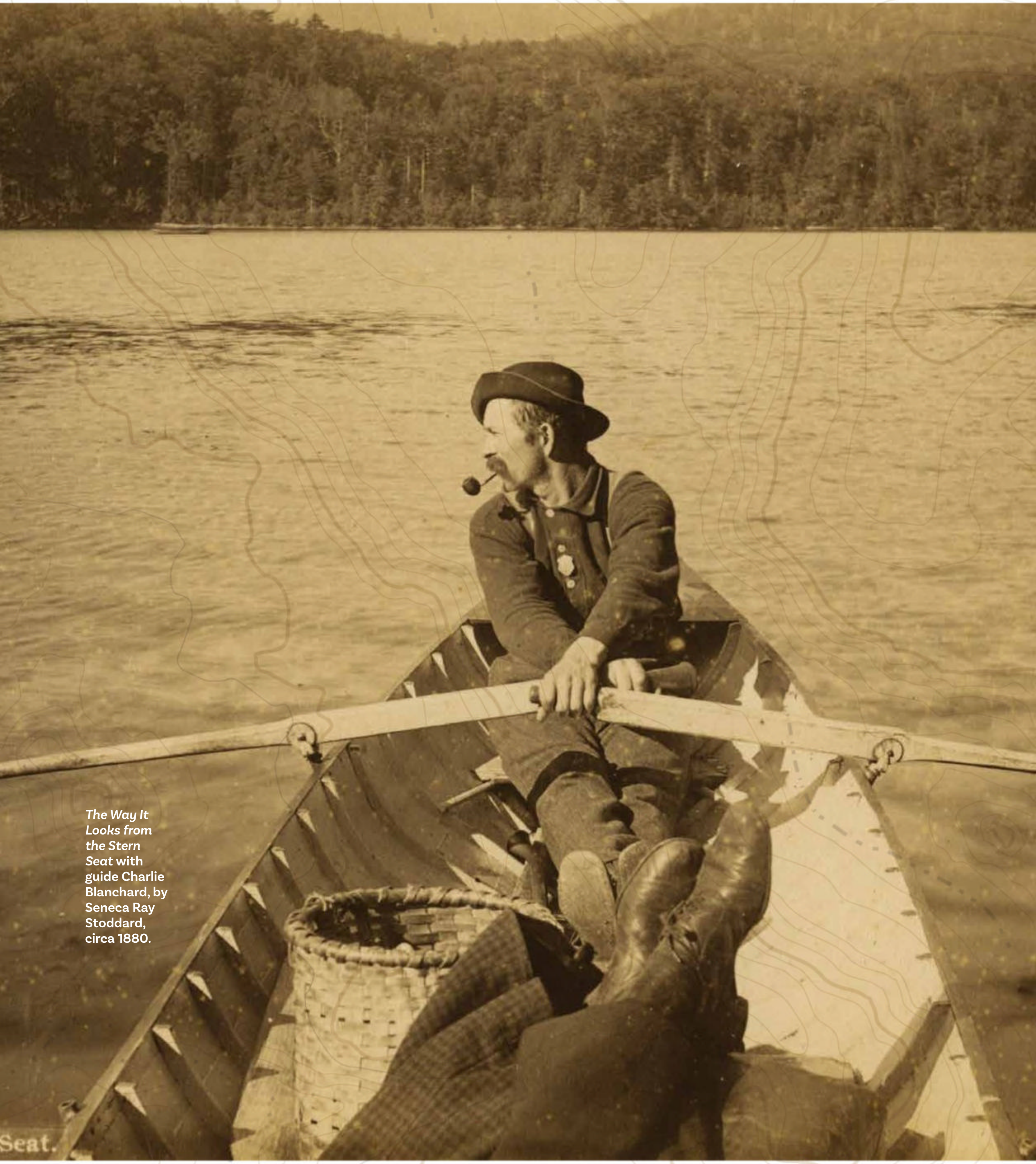
There's no one way to decorate an Adirondack home, English explains. "The region's Great Camps weren't just filled with Adirondack furniture," but pieces from their owners' travels around the world—"whatever people who moved up here brought with them. But the foundation of the Adirondack Store was products from this country, and so we'll continue to do that."

English and Dori Shin's vision is to continue to expand the Adirondack Store beyond the Blue Line—in 2020, despite the pandemic, they opened a branch in New Canaan, Connecticut, that's been successful.

Next up: food. The Tall Pine coffee bar was first incorporated into the Connecticut store. In spring 2026 a restaurant of the same name will open in the former Masonic Hall next door to the Adirondack Store. English bought the building that had housed The Well Dressed Food Company, gutted it and has been meticulously renovating it. The new space, which will be open for breakfast, lunch and, in summer, evening events, has seating for 45 people and highlights the 1909 building's original brick walls, tin ceilings and maple floors. "I really wanted to do it right," says English. "I felt it was important for the community in the long term."

English's concern for the health and success of Adirondack towns extends to his employees—he and Dori Shin provide housing to those who need it. In addition to the 10 who work at their Adirondack Stores in Lake Placid and Tupper, they own Lake Placid Comics and Games, on Main Street, and Furniture Weekend, in Ray Brook, which they use as a furniture warehouse and distribution center. The plan is for the 14,000-square-foot building to eventually house other regional retailers.

"It's so important for our communities to support local businesses—and to pass them to the next generation so they continue to grow," says English. "We must look to the past to see into the future."



The Way It Looks from the Stern Seat with guide Charlie Blanchard, by Seneca Ray Stoddard, circa 1880.

LEADING THE WAY

Celebrating the backwoods wisdom of Adirondack guides

A **GOOD GUIDE, LIKE A GOOD WIFE,** is indispensable to one's success, pleasure and peace. … The wilderness has unfolded to them its mysteries, and made them wise with a wisdom nowhere written in books. This wilderness is their home." Or so wrote William H. H. Murray in his 1869 *Adventures in the Wilderness*, the book that turbocharged early Adirondack tourism. But what was life really like for generations of guides? Read on for a collection from our archives that pulls back the curtain on that rough-and-tumble world.

A Noble Set

by **Elizabeth Folwell**

October 2000

IF THE ADIRONDACK GUIDE didn't exist as a living, breathing action hero, we would have invented him anyway. Every distinctive landscape has some kind of rugged, romanticized historical figure that arose from a particular way of life: the cowboys of the Great Plains, the voyageurs of the upper Midwest, California Forty-Niners, Maine lobstermen. Guides are a bit different, in that the profession was a response to how other people chose to experience the wilderness; for the first time, outdoor recreation—not a commodity like beef or fur or gold—was fueling a local economy.

When settlers first moved to the Adirondacks from New England and Canada, they came to farm, cut timber and mine ore. Sometimes they scraped a living together performing all three, so adding another cold-cash task to an already complicated resumé wasn't that big a leap. Likewise, adding a room or two onto the family farmstead for out-of-town guests who wished for a real bed before they opted for balsam boughs in a bark shanty was a logical step too. By the time America had recovered enough from the Civil War to appreciate clean air, wild country and the pursuit of happiness as embodied by fish and game, the guides were there to show people the way. For two bucks a day—a bargain even then—you could hire a man, his guideboat and a couple of rangy hounds to create your own adventure.

All this hardscrabble independence, though, set up a service caste that had no intention of ever being servants. As photographer and guidebook author Seneca Ray Stoddard saw it, "they are, as a class, a noble set of men who see themselves as the equals of their employer." Truth be told, after a long day pulling at the oars followed by setting up camp, preparing dinner and all but tucking the exhausted sports in for the night, I suspect many woodsmen felt a tad superior to their clients.

Guides came in all shapes and sizes, from "tall, bony, shaggy, one-legged" Chris Crandall, who took Ansel Judd Northrup around Meacham Lake and secured immortality through the pages of *Camps and Tramps in the Adirondacks*, to corpulent Ed Arnold, from the Fulton Chain, remembered now for his skill with a fly rod and timber-rattling snores. Typical guides were idolized with assessments like S. H. Hammond's "as jolly, good-natured people … albeit rough and unpolished" standard issue in the popular press.

Old Mountain Phelps charmed the urbanites with his fluffy beard, archaic outlook and peculiar figures of speech, delivering, according to one writer, "his sage conclusions, and whimsical oddities in cheery, cherripy, squeaky sort of tone—an octave above the ordinary voice, suggestive of the warblings of an ancient chickadee."

Some observers, though, saw the flaws as clearly as the flash. In the 1870s Stoddard met up with Raquette Lake guide Alvah Dunning and reported, "Old Alvah was in his normal condition—suffering from ill treatment. He has always been a sufferer." North Elba's Bill Nye was recorded as "silent, morose even"; oth-

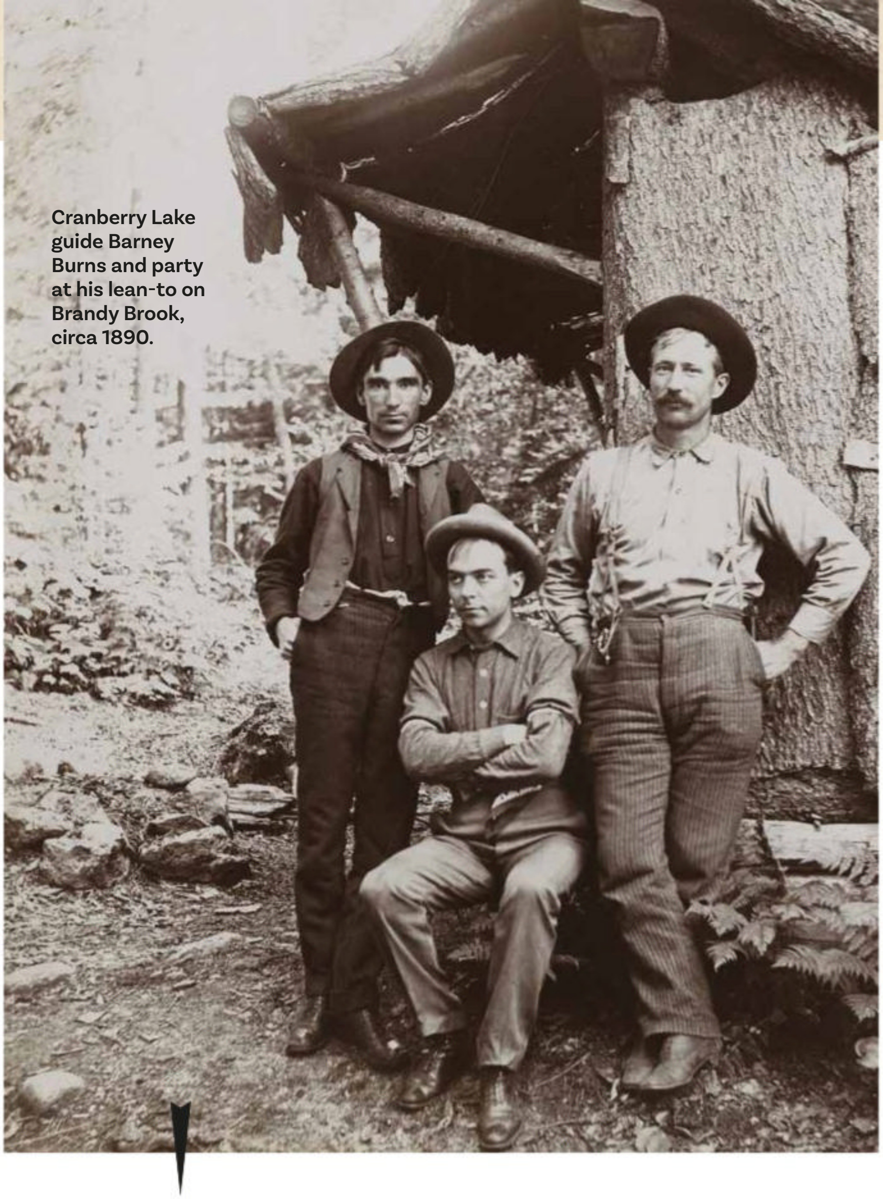
Roaring Brook at the mouth of the Cold River, by Seneca Ray Stoddard, 1896.

er guides, we may assume, with underwhelming personalities and middling woodcraft skills, faded back into the woods.

The larger-than-life legacy of the old-time guides leaves us with a beloved cast of colorful characters, more than a few trails up the High Peaks and an altered ark of native beasts. If it's true that Mitchell Sabattis killed nine panthers and 20 moose during his decades-long career, his modest demeanor was not a charade for the benefit of outsiders. There were far more productive hunters, like John Cheney, who bludgeoned a wolf to death to save his own skin, and who tallied 600 deer, 400 fishers, 30 otters, six wolves and possibly the last beaver left in the state. The champion bipedal predator may have been Elijah Simonds, who claimed he killed "three thousand foxes, two thousand deer, 150 bears, twelve moose and seven panthers, besides more mink, otter and martin than any other man who lived in the Adirondacks," according to Charles Brumley in *Guides of the Adirondacks*.

Luckily, the guides themselves realized their excesses were taking a toll. Some of them urged the state to create hunting, fishing and trapping seasons as well as bag limits. Market hunting, which had provided meat for many hotels, was banned; dynamiting fish, hounding deer and night hunting were all outlawed by the early 1900s.

In the 21st century, the Adirondack guide's job description has changed. He or she may be called upon for rock-climbing, wild-food gathering, bird-watching or instruction in using a global positioning system as often as to lead a sport on the trail of a white-tailed buck. And the guide's clientele has changed too, from mostly men in the prime of life to children, women or senior citizens—which is a good thing, since we all could benefit from the experts as we learn the ways of the woods.



Cranberry Lake guide Barney Burns and party at his lean-to on Brandy Brook, circa 1890.

A Guide's Story

by John N. Dumas

October 1982

NOT MANY ARE LEFT who can spin first-hand accounts of life in the Adirondacks at the turn of the century. One who can is Jane Arnold, an 88-year-old widow of Scotia, New York. An Adirondack native, she is the daughter of Henry Davis, one of the better-known guides operating out of the Saranac Lake area from 1885 to 1921, when he died. She begins with recollections of what her parents told her about the family's migration from the Champlain Valley to Saranac Lake in 1885.

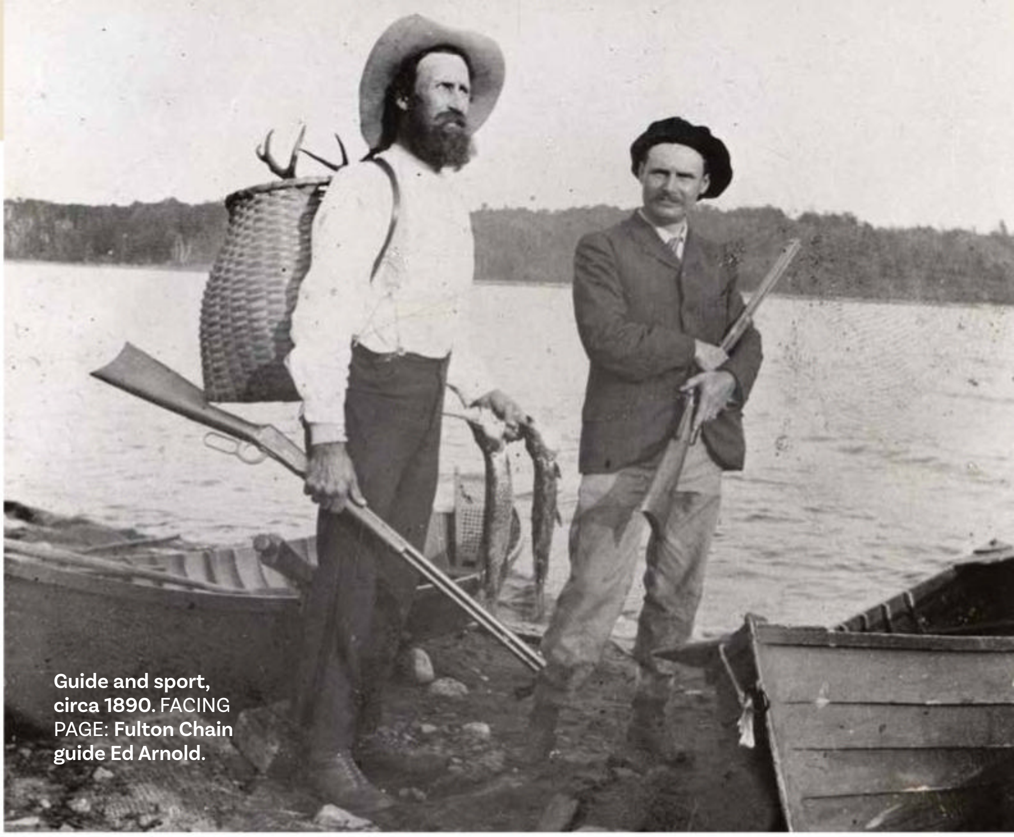
Henry Davis, then 29, had come from a farm family near Dannemora. Seven years earlier, he had married Jane Nelson, the daughter of a neighboring farmer. Henry had tried farming, "picking rocks until his fingers bled," according to Mrs. Arnold, "but he gave it up to go to work in the iron mine at Lyon Mountain, thinking it would be easier. He worked as a dynamiter and one day a blast injured him and 20 other men.

"It wounded Father in the leg and left iron dust in one of his eyes. Finally a doctor came up from Plattsburgh and picked iron dust out of that eye for hours. Father was so glad to have his sight saved that he never went back to the mine."

Henry Davis decided to make a new life for himself and his family in the mountain hamlet that was just beginning its transformation from a lumbering town into a resort community and a health spa. Dr. Edward Livingston Trudeau had recovered from tuberculosis in the crisp mountain air and other "consumptives" were being attracted to the place. The only means of access was stagecoach, but gentlemen sportsmen from East Coast cities were nonetheless lured by stories of giant brook trout and lake trout. By North Country standards, Saranac's future looked bright.

"Father had been there before," said Mrs. Arnold. "He had fished and hunted there and knew a guide by the name of Stephen Martin. He thought it was going to be a boomtown, and he was right."

Others saw it in a different light at the time. Dr. J. Lundi, another health seeker, described Saranac Lake as a "miserable hamlet which consists of 50 or 60 log and frame houses." It had two country stores, an old sawmill, a steam mill, a small grist mill and a population of 300 or 400. It also had a newly built resort hotel called Miller's, which would be the forerunner of other great resort hotels like the Algonquin, the Ampersand, the Riverside, Saranac Inn and Wawbeek.



Guide and sport, circa 1890. FACING PAGE: **Fulton Chain guide Ed Arnold.**

"Now if you can just picture this," said Mrs. Arnold, "here is a young man with a wife and four children, the oldest not yet six years and the youngest just six months. It is March and of course it is very cold. He gets his brother Frank to help and he loads up two borrowed farm wagons with all their worldly possessions and starts out for this godforsaken place in the mountains where he hopes to make his living as a guide.

"I have to give my mother a lot of credit for going along with it. She told me she worried most about whether the youngest, Eunice, would suffocate or freeze to death on the two-day trip."

They stayed overnight at Loon Lake, which was a way station on the toll road between Port Kent and Hopkinton. Next day they went through Bloomingdale, which at that time was a thriving community on the stage run, and then on to Saranac Lake. Later on, Frank had to bring the horses and wagons back to the farm.

The first night the Davises stayed at the home of Stephen Martin. The next day they moved into a rented house a few miles away at Peck's Corners. But they did not stay there long. Mrs. Davis, an apostle of cleanliness, discovered immediately that the rented house was crawling with bedbugs and she insisted upon leaving. Within a few weeks they relocated in a rented log cabin only a couple of hundred yards from the shore of Ampersand Bay on Lower Saranac Lake. It was only a step from their new home to Miller's Hotel, where a guide could find work. But it was two miles to town for supplies and they had no horse or wagon. Neighbors were obliging, however, and provisions, except for staples, came from a garden and a plentiful supply of fish and game.

Across Ampersand Bay from Miller's the Ampersand Hotel and Cottages were built, larger and more luxurious than Miller's, with more affluent patrons. It was there that Henry Davis began to earn his reputation as one of the best Adirondack guides—a reputation that attracted a roster of regular clients which included some of the wealthiest men of the time.

The rental fee for the cabin was at first $4 a month, later raised to $5. The downstairs consisted of a large kitchen and living room and one small bedroom. Upstairs was one large bunkroom for the children.

"Mother liked the place from the beginning," Mrs. Arnold recalled. "She always talked about the cooling breezes off the lake in the summer and how snug and warm it was in winter. It had a cast iron woodstove in the parlor and a cast iron cooking stove in the kitchen."

The Davises lived in the cabin for seven years, surviving the blizzard of 1888, when snow fell continuously from March 11 to March 17. Repeatedly, Henry Davis fought his way around the perimeter of the cabin with a shovel and a broom, cleaning snow away from the windows. During those seven years, two sons were born, Albert and Nelson. The family now included six children: Ida, Frank, Elizabeth, Eunice and the young boys—too many for the small cabin. And so in 1892 the Davises had a house built on Lake Street, a mile closer to town. It occupied a half-acre that commanded a view of Saddleback (MacKenzie) Mountain to the east.

The place cost a little less than $1,000, which had been carefully saved out of guiding fees of $3 or $4 a day. It consisted of a large kitchen, a roomy pantry, a modest living room, one downstairs bedroom and four upstairs bedrooms. At the rear was a horse barn and a dug well.

Under the house (still standing at 124 Lake Street) was a stone foundation enclosing a dirt-floored cellar, where perishable foods could be stored safely in tight metal containers. The house was comfortable but it stood in the open on a mound of sandy loam. "It was hot in the summer," Mrs. Arnold said, "and Mother always missed the shade of the cabin and the cool breezes off the lake.

"The year they moved into the new house, I was born. … Two years later, my sister Anna was born and that made eight children living."

Mrs. Arnold remembers her father being away from home much of the time. The job of rearing eight children weighed heavily on her mother. Jane Davis commanded the homestead with firm but loving discipline, tending two wood fires in winter and one for cooking all summer, washing by hand for the large family, baking eight loaves of bread every other day and walking a mile to town for food supplies.

Henry Davis's absences were a consequence of his success as a guide. To be a "personal guide" with a regular following was more prestigious than being a "hotel guide," answering the call of the latest arrival from downstate. But being a personal guide meant being available for trips to remote corners of the Adirondacks or Canada whenever an important client was so inclined.

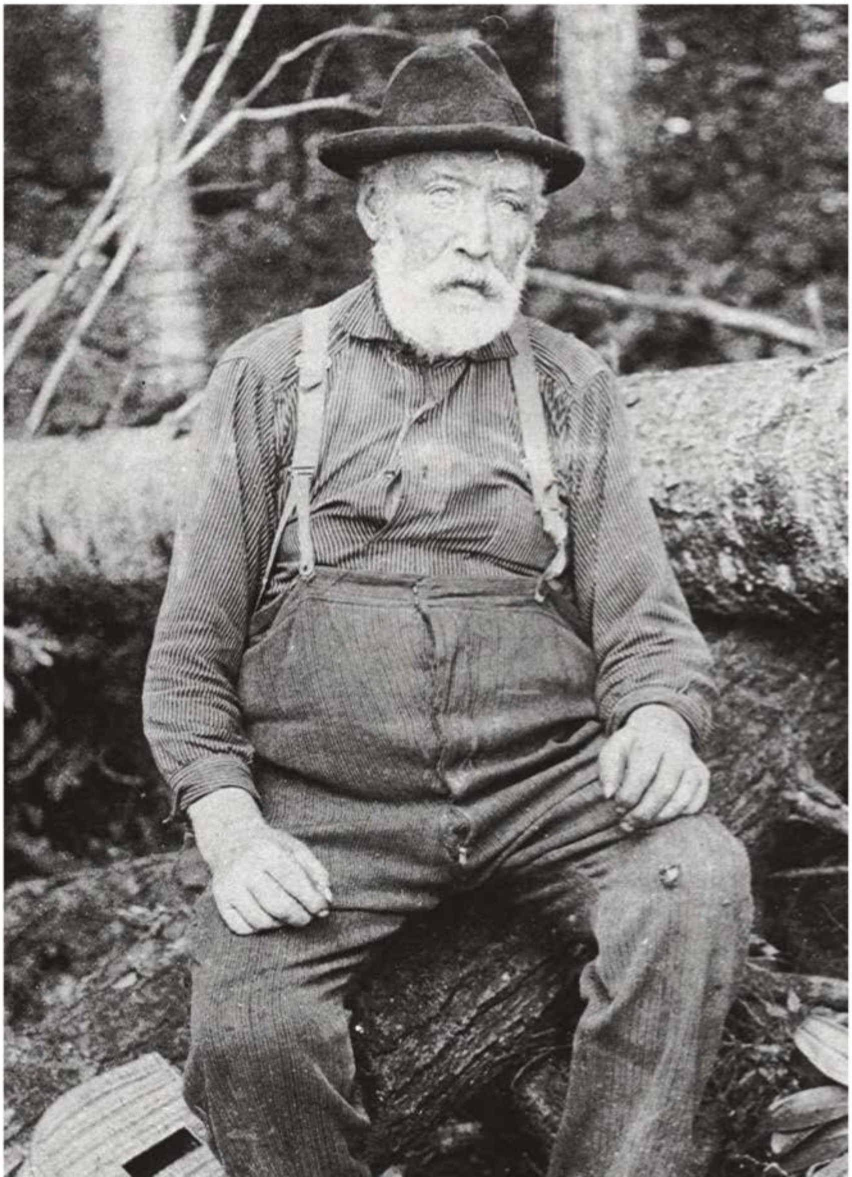
In the early 1900s, Henry Davis acquired a camp at Long Pond. The camp was accessible by a 40-minute train ride, followed by a one-mile hike and then a trip by guideboat from the Long Pond narrows to a beautiful point at the northeast end of the pond. The point was high and dry and studded with towering spruces, a perfect place to house and entertain his clientele. The camp stood on state land, and occupancy was by permission of the state.

At first the camp was a tent colony, and soon after he acquired it, he came close to losing it. A disastrous forest fire swept over the region in 1903. Henry and a few helpers worked through two nights, dousing the canvas buildings with water passed hand-to-hand up the steep bank from the pond.

In 1911, his clientele expanding, Henry erected on the site a large main building of logs covered with canvas. He had no way of knowing that three years later, the state would pass new regulations governing the design and construction of such state camps; the log structure had to be torn down and rebuilt to conform. All the materials, including lumber, had to be carried on foot and by guideboat from the railroad to the site. By lashing two guideboats together, a load of several hundred pounds could be towed by an oarsman in a third boat.

Mrs. Arnold remembers being "chief cook and bottle washer" at the camp when she was in her late teens. It was not unusual to have 12 or 14 hungry men to feed, and although fish and game were a regular part of the menu, flour, sugar, potatoes and vegetables had to be carried in by packbasket. The train would deposit the Davises and others at the Floodwood station, a half mile down from the trail that cut through the woods to Long Pond. It is not surprising that Henry and his sons tired of the carry along the railroad tracks, their boots sinking into the cinders with every step. Before long they acquired a hand car which could carry their provisions and which could be lifted from the tracks and hidden in the bushes after each trip. Such private use of the tracks was, of course, illegal, and numerous unsuccessful attempts were made by railroad authorities to stop the illicit traffic.

Mrs. Arnold recalls that one spring, when she was about 18, her father decided to reward her with an outing in return for her help in opening the camp for the summer season. They were alone at Long Pond, and Henry, by now well into his 50s, was suffering the pain of fallen arches and bowed knees, the result of countless hours on the trail with guideboat or packbasket on his back.



ED ARNOLD PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF TOWN OF WEBB HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION. ALL OTHER PHOTOGRAPHS FROM ADIRONDACK EXPERIENCE

"'Jennie,' Father said to me, 'do you think you can carry the guideboat to Bessie Pond? The tree buds are as big as mouse ears and I think we can catch some trout.'"

She did carry the 60-pound boat on a yoke on her shoulders across the mile or so of trail to Bessie Pond, and they did catch trout that day. As fast as they dropped their hooks in the water, high-colored, orange-bellied beauties attacked the bait. Back at Long Pond camp, the fish they kept filled the largest iron skillet in the kitchen.

"It was one of the rare times that I had Father all to myself," said Mrs. Arnold. "I will never forget it."

Another occasion she vividly recalls was her father's proudest day in hunting camp. All three of his sons were in the hunting party. Old Hank had always hoped his sons would love fishing and hunting as much as he did, but for a while it had appeared they might be distracted by girls and golf on a course that had been established on the hill behind their house. On the day in question, however, all three sons bagged heavy-racked bucks in the shadow of Long Pond Mountain.

"Father was not one to get excited easily," said Mrs. Arnold. "But this day he burst into the kitchen where Mother was and yelled, 'Come on out here, Jane, and see what your boys have done!'"

Right after ice-out in the spring of 1920, Henry Davis was at the Long Pond camp with a client when he developed severe stomach cramps. Sickness, even so much as a cold, was virtually unknown to him and so he paid little attention to the abdominal distress. Days passed while he stubbornly refused to make the long trek out by boat and railroad. By the time he agreed to leave, his appendix had ruptured and peritonitis had set in.

For four days he waited in agony in Saranac Lake General Hospital for death to come.

"Father kept saying he wasn't going to make it. Finally, on May 9, 1920, when we were all gathered at his bedside, he asked Nelson, my youngest brother, to recite the 23rd Psalm. Nelson got down on his knees and his voice broke but somehow he got through it. Father died peacefully before the prayer was over."

Henry Davis is buried in Pine Ridge Cemetery at Saranac Lake, alongside his wife, who died in 1942 at the age of 85.

"It took those kind of people," Mrs. Arnold said firmly, "to make it possible for others to enjoy our beautiful mountains. Nowadays everyone has it so easy, but I wonder if we're really better off." ▲

Ahead of Their Time

by Michael Cunningham

October 2000

THE ADIRONDACK GUIDE is an icon: a fiercely individual and solitary figure of the woods, plucky, weathered. Indeed, many guides were virtual hermits, taking on clients only to earn a bit of hard money to finance their backcountry independence. And the profession was decidedly masculine, as were most of the clients.

However, the Adirondack Park has not only been a place of solitude, it has required its people to develop strong families and a sense of community in order to survive. Among the guides in these mountains it was no different. Fathers taught their sons, and their sons passed on the knowledge. Lists of Adirondack guides produce the names of very few women, a handful really.

Yet fathers taught their daughters too, and husbands worked side-by-side with their wives on the farms and in the forests. There is some evidence to suggest that participation by women in the craft of guiding may have been more widespread than past outdoor writers would lead us to believe, and that the partnerships of marriage and family resulted in partnerships in the woods and on the waters. The Adirondack guide as woman is not the image we see in 19th-century engravings, although understanding her role may allow us to see those men in the pictures more clearly, more humanly.

Katherine (Kit) Charbonneau Ehrensbeck, 92, and Edith (Edie) Tuttle Morcy, 97, are two daughters of the Adirondacks who learned the art of guiding in the early years of the last century. Both women grew up in the Town of Webb in the southwestern Adirondacks. Kit was born in Old Forge on July 6, 1908. Edie was born in New London, New York, on June 26, 1903, moving to the Old Forge area at three years of age when the state put the Mohawk Barge Canal right through the Tuttle family farm. Guiding for Kit and Edie developed in the most natural way. Both had an innate love for the woods and fathers who were very nurturing and patient as teachers.

At 17 Kit met Earl Ehrensbeck, who she eventually married in 1927, and they were true partners, guiding and trapping together for decades. Edie's life at her family's Bay View Hotel included almost daily guiding excursions with the guests, who sought the valued services of her father and her equally expert mother. Later, after marrying Clayton Morcy, Edie delighted in guiding for the sheer pleasure of passing on her joy of the outdoors.

Kit's father was Quebec-born David Charbonneau, one of the first Adirondack guides and already a local fixture before the turn of the 20th century. A woodsman of great skill and in demand by clients, Charbonneau was no solitary recluse but a founding father of several Old Forge institutions—the first superintendent of the Town of Webb Schools, a town justice and an instrumental member of the Browns Tract Guides Association. He was active in creating standards for guides both for pay and quality of service and later helped the organization embrace wildlife conservation as a key mission. Community and family were deeply important to him. Though his boys hunted for pleasure, only his baby daughter displayed the interest and passion he had for the woods and streams, and he took her along.

One of Kit's earliest memories is going guiding with her father to the camp of Senator Joseph Frelinghuysen of New Jersey. "I can remember my father putting me in a packbasket, I may have been four or five years old, and carrying me up to Little Moose Lake. From right here in the middle of town to Little Moose is seven or eight

| *Continued on page 58*

Raquette Lake area guide Richard Burch and hunting party, circa 1890. FACING PAGE: **Guide and sports' catch, by Seneca Ray Stoddard, circa 1890.**

STRAND
G BAD

Bob Card and Helen Zyma have brought the Strand Theatre back to its original Art Deco glory.

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CLASSIC CINEMA

The caretakers of Old Forge's landmark theater

by
TIM ROWLAND

photographs by
JULIE WALMSLEY

SOME MEN COME HOME with sorry old cars, some men come home with sorry old dogs, some men come home with sorry old Army buddies. Bob Card, who had always found edificial reclamation projects difficult to resist, came home with a sorry old movie theater.

Fortunately his partner, Helen Zyma, was not (entirely) dismayed. She became Card's accomplice as the couple assessed the condition of the Strand Theatre in Old Forge and turned it into such a bedazzling Art Deco showpiece that this summer it was presented with a 2025 Preservation Award by Adirondack Architectural Heritage (AARCH).

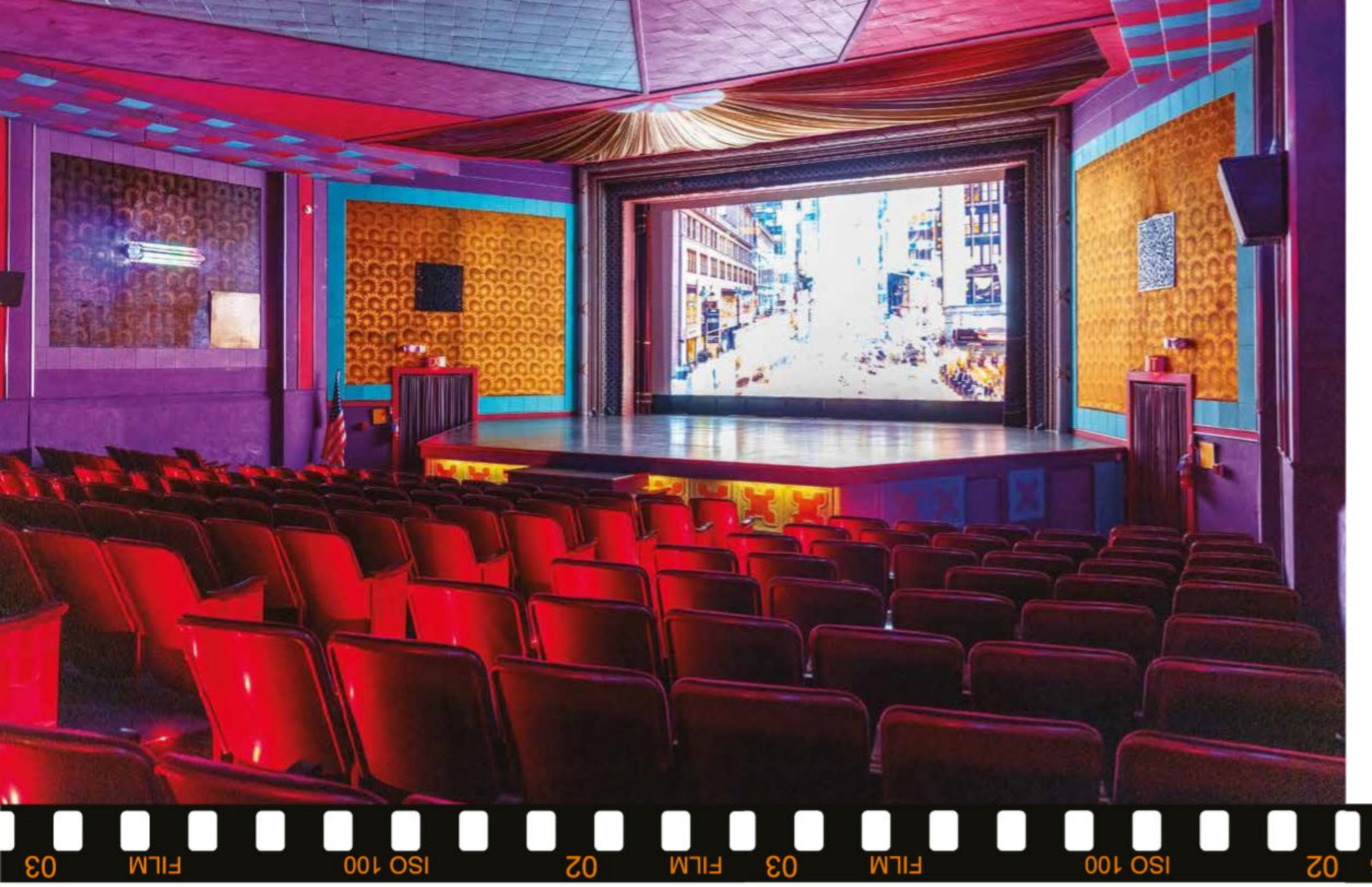
Beyond the architectural significance, the Strand is an incubator of stories and relationships, time passed on first dates and rainy days spent in the popcorned dark. It has marked time not by the calendar, but by the blockbuster. *Star Wars*, *Jurassic Park*, *Harry Potter*.

When *Jaws* returned to the theater to celebrate the 50th anniversary, an attendee mentioned she had worked at the Strand in 1975 and had seen the film 28 times.

These theaters are a dying breed, squeezed between the big multiplexes on one side and an infinite number of home entertainment options on the other. The Strand has survived in part because it is the only theater for miles around, and in part because it continues to grow more enchanting as the years go by.

Card and Zyma added their own story to the ledger, when the couple of 31 years decided to tie the knot in the lobby in 2019, after Zyma, a school librarian at Poland Central School, discovered Card could be added to her insurance—but only if they were married.

"We found somebody that would marry us, but she couldn't do it over the weekend," Zyma said. "She could do it on Monday, so I worked all day at school, came home, walked the dogs, came in here,



got married … we were just holding our breath that somebody wasn't going to interrupt the ceremony for popcorn."

Erin Tobin, executive director of AARCH, said that community theaters like the one in Old Forge were significant not just architecturally, but economically and of course socially. Many housed other storefronts, with upstairs apartments. "Movie theaters were an important third place—not home, not work or school," she said. "They were a place everyone in the community could come together."

Tobin said this makes Card and Zyma good stewards not just of the building, but of the social fabric.

For more than a century, it has always been so.

The theater opened in 1923, built by Charles Thomson and his son, Raymond. "In the history of the town, that had to be a pretty significant addition, this far out, and at that period of time," Card said. The Thomsons also owned the Forge House, a grand hotel that dominated the knoll above Old Forge Pond. The family, writes historian Charles Herr, had made Old Forge "the entertainment capital of the Fulton Chain."

It didn't last. The theater had scarcely been open a year when the Forge House burned to the ground, effectively ending the Thomsons' long-term investments in Old Forge. They sold the theater in 1925, the same year that, half a world away, the Paris International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts was unfurling a bold new style that would become known as Art Deco.

Art Deco couldn't have clashed more with the rustic, birchbark environment of the Adirondacks, and for the most part it was ignored, Tobin said. But it spoke to movie houses, which in their day were at the cutting edge of a wondrous era of technological advancement.

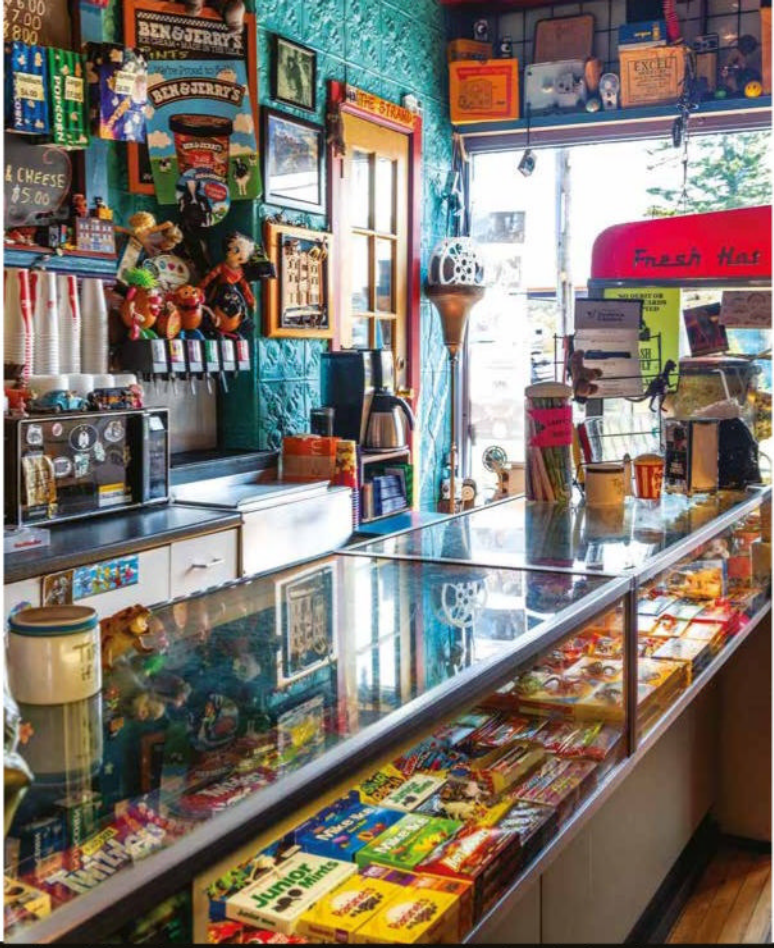
The new owners changed the name to The Strand, tiled over the tin ceilings, hung vivid wall coverings, installed colored tube lighting and adopted a paint scheme that shattered the Adirondack tradition of white with forest green or burgundy trim.

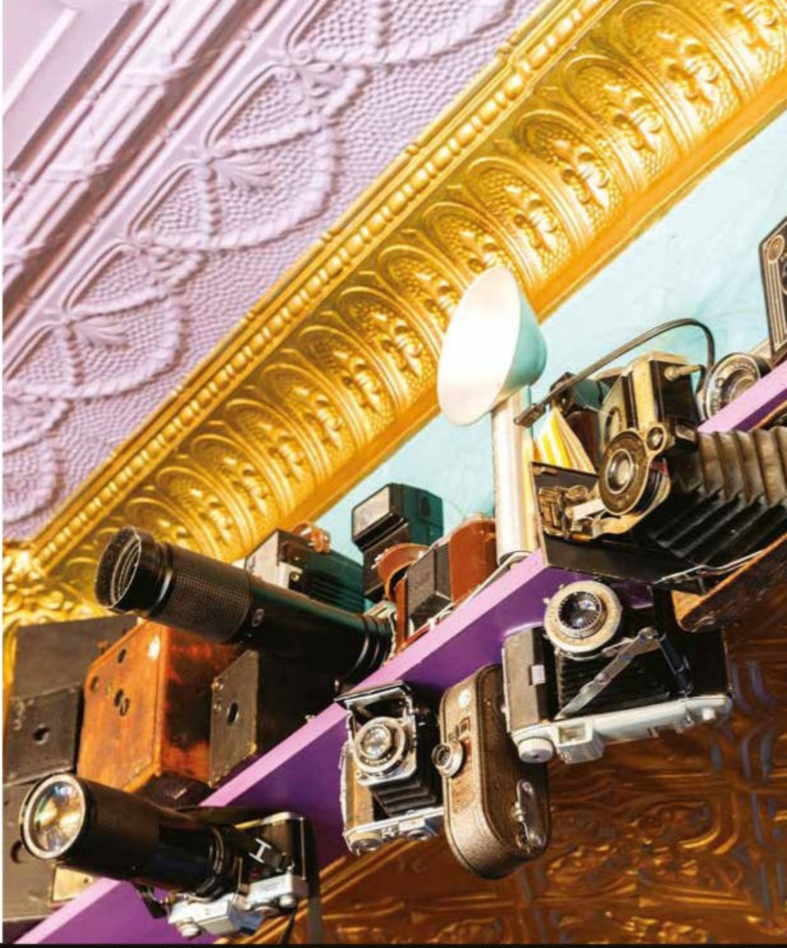
Through the years, this style was painted over and covered up but still largely intact when Card and Zyma began the rather monumental task of restoring the theater to past glories.

By the early '90s, the age of The Strand was showing in multiple ways, from the worn seats to dropped ceilings to technology that was on the brink of extinction. The lobby had been painted an unfortunate combination of brown and yellow.

At the time, the theater had one screen and no heat, operating only in summer. Even when a furnace was installed, the community wasn't convinced. "We put in a heating system, but for years people were still bringing blankets," Zyma said.

The lobby's tin ceiling was restored; the vintage seats were sent out to be repaired and powder-coated; an addition facilitated more screens, which made the theater more economically viable; the color scheme was restored to an eye-popping aqua, purple and red—a brighter rendition of the original pas-





tels. No detail was too small to be overlooked, from the back-wall louvers to the colored wall sconces, now with LED bulbs.

So too are there bits and pieces—tin, molding, decorative trim—that Card has scavenged from other theaters that did not survive the wrecking ball; filaments of those theaters live on in The Strand.

But behind the scenes, the greatest change was from 35-millimeter film to digital.

For the better part of a century, traditional bulbs were not bright or white enough to illuminate the film. So the light source was produced by an intense sparking arc between two carbon rods, which demanded constant attention lest they burn unevenly.

The rule of thumb was that this setup worked perfectly, until the attendant dashed out of the projection room for a bathroom break, at which point a telltale groan from the audience indicated the spark had failed and the screen had gone dark.

These monstrous projectors are now part of The Strand's most tantalizing treat: an astonishing collection of vintage cameras and theater ephemera lining the halls and shelving, occasionally sharing space with toys that include Hot Wheels cars, stuffed animals and plastic dinosaurs. Card said his infatuation with cameras began with the Polaroid Swinger (look it up, kids) produced in the late 1960s. That's grown into a museum-quality collection artfully arranged throughout The Strand.

You can find the Kodak Instamatic X-45 you were given for Christmas as a child, or the Canon AE-1 you graduated to as you grew older. If you want to see a Russian knockoff of a Hasselblad, it's there. A plastic stegosaurus sitting astride the telephoto lens of a classic German Exakta? No problem.

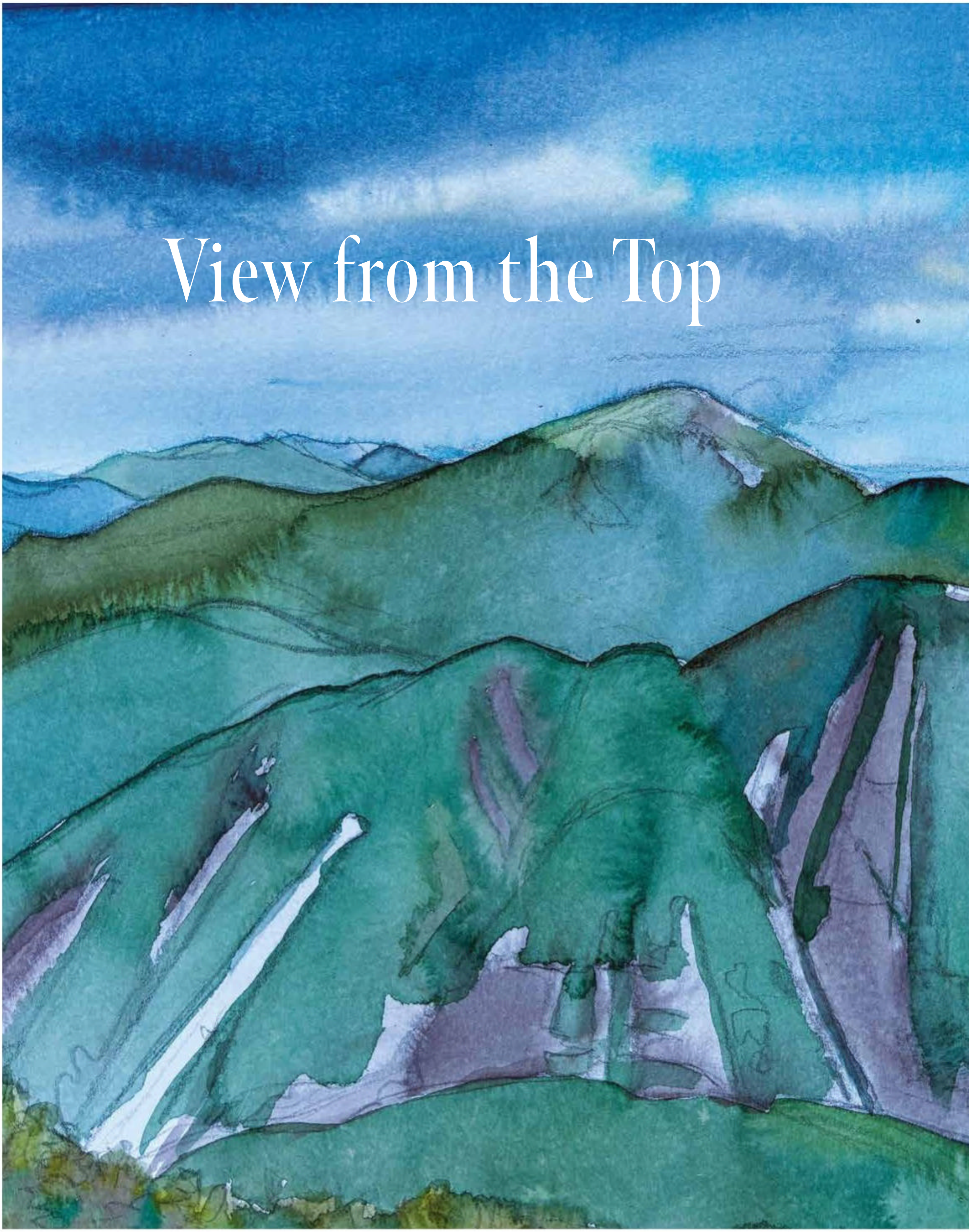
But more than collectors' items, these cameras and toys have added to the sense that The Strand is a shared piece of the community. When people find an old camera in the attic, they know what to do with it. Same for a treasured toy. (The toy collection began with unclaimed playthings left behind by children after a show and grew from there.)

Card will run into people who have old photos of the theater, which they donate. A non-verbal resident created an excellent painting of The Strand, which he donated with obvious pride.

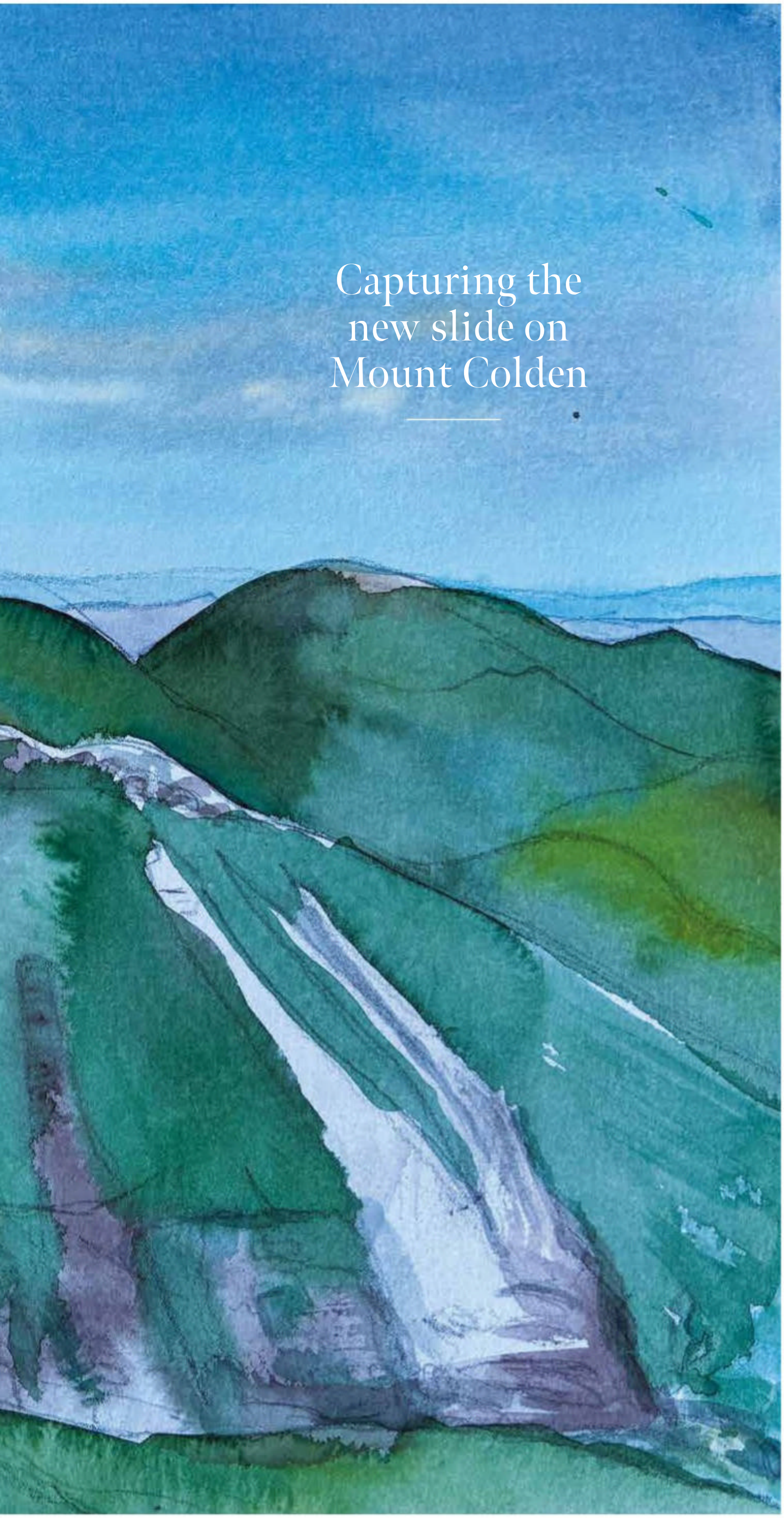
Zyma pointed out a stuffed Chihuahua with a bow tie. "I think his name is Toby and he belonged to an elderly woman in town who had him when she was a little girl and just couldn't bear to throw him out." ▲

The Strand Theatre
(315-369-2792, strandoldforge.com)
is at 3093 State Route 28, in Old Forge.

View from the Top



Capturing the new slide on Mount Colden



MONDAY, JULY 21ST, an unseasonably cool day during a hot and humid Adirondack summer, presented an opportunity to hike something ambitious. Eager to get back into climbing High Peaks after a long hiatus, I decided on Algonquin. It would be an opportunity to see, firsthand, the new slides caused by the torrential rains just over a week ago, on Mount Colden.

At the High Peaks Information Center, I learned that the windchill would bring temps down into the 30s on the summit. The wind wasn't much of an issue when I reached the top at 1:30 p.m. Summit steward Eli Steinberg pointed out the new slide, already named for Brendan Jackson, a backcountry ranger who recently died on the job. The Jackson slide is seven miles as the crow flies from Duck Hole, where Brendan passed away.

The new slide, white and gleaming, is to the left of Colden's older slides. A second, smaller slide is at the top of the Trap Dike (a geologic cleft in the face of the mountain). An existing slide on the far right of the mountain face is newly widened and scoured by the recent saturating rains, leaving an impressive debris-pile at its foot. The amount of bare rock on Colden appears to be at a tipping point, where the face of the mountain could be reduced to a dome-shaped rock. Eli said that Department of Environmental Conservation rangers were exploring the new slide when they came upon people already climbing it. The quest to be the "first" is strong among

text & painting by
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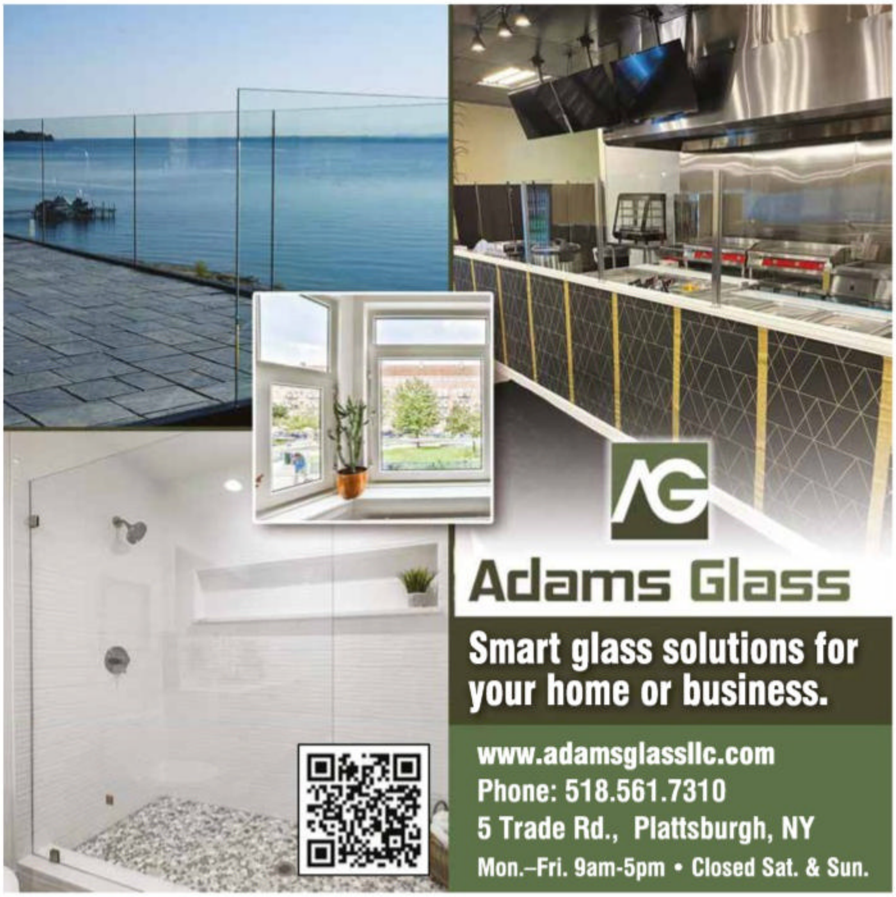
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mountain adventurers.

I understand their enthusiasm. When I'm hiking and emerging from the forest, shifting from difficult footing on uneven cobbles to smooth bedrock near a summit, I feel a burst of energy. I am drawn to the special quality of the solid coarse-grained anorthosite that stays grippy when wet, and, where the rock dominates, there's a chance to see out of the dense northern forest.

The route through Avalanche Pass is now closed due to the landslide. The last time the trail closed was in 1999, when Hurricane Floyd spun off a deluge that created a significant slide on Colden as well as several other peaks. In 2002, after the trail reopened, my wife, Ren, and I walked through Avalanche Pass. The restored trail was carved out of piles of timbers and debris, chain-sawed, and excavated. It felt like nature's equivalent of the urban wreckage that we witnessed after the World Trade Towers fell on 9/11, a few blocks from where Ren lived before we moved to the North Country. It reminded us of the upended order of systems, the feeling of being unmoored.

On my July hike I was working on my physical-conditioning for climbing mountains, but I was also "in training" for the Adirondack Plein Air Festival that happens in August, carrying my watercolor kit in my backpack to get acclimated to working in the field. Setting out, and sitting down, to focus on completing a piece of art starts with a worthy premise, setting off on the right foot. I'm often fraught with trepidation of making the right choices, re-creating past successes, the challenge of capturing the moving target of ever-changing light. Even after several decades of chasing it, I often fail at such efforts.

The process for executing the watercolor on site has similarities to planning for climbing a mountain. Variables are not fixed, and are dependent on the whims of weather, and one's preparedness. The drawing is the structure and "scaffolding" that supports, hopefully, an unlabored painting. Embarking on a drawing—in this case essentially a portrait of a mountain—my strategy is to aim for the kind of accuracy I look for

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in a map or a field guide, as if I will need it to plot a course up the mountain. The drawing gives me time to contemplate my intended subject and how I'll get in and out of the painting when it comes time to handle a wet brush. The focus for this piece is the architecture of contrasty bright white and warm gray rock and the patchwork of forest cover.

I try not to linger in the painting stage too long, as my goal is for the fluid medium to bleed into pre-wetted areas on its own. Overly manipulating the surface with a brush hazards stepping on what the medium naturally does. I dropped in color and the suggestion of mass and light in one fell swoop, without getting bogged down in description. My hope is for a piece that appears to be executed with ease, even joy, despite whatever struggle ensues.

By 3 p.m. I packed up my supplies to enjoy other views from the summit. The few dozen hikers and summit steward had just departed. I marveled at the rock features and vistas. But by 4:30, with darkness four hours off, I was overtaken by the feeling I had overstayed. With reluctance I re-entered the shadows of the forest, a constant stream flowed over the rugged trail the length of my descent. Slipping on the pitched rock was hard to avoid. As with many of the popular Adirondack trails, the route is pounded into a boneyard of rocks, mud wallows and exposed tree-roots. After such outings, I often take measure of how, in the future, to do these kinds of pursuits in a smarter way, with less effort, and more efficiency. While both hiking and plein-air painting bring me into the physical present, the here and now, I'm also grateful that the effort yields vivid memories, and an artifact, lasting beyond the moment.

Peter Seward is an illustrator and fine art painter and music programmer. He and his wife, Ren Davidson Seward, established Lake Flower Landing (lakeflowerlanding.com), an event space in their studio-gallery, in Saranac Lake.

Continued from page 49

miles. Then we had to take a rowboat over to Senator Frelinghuysen's camp, where my father was guide and caretaker. He took me because I wanted to go. I just loved being in the woods, even as a little girl."

Kit Charbonneau met Earl Ehrensbeck while she was working at a soda fountain, Given's Goody Shop, and after marriage began many years of outdoor life with him. Earl was from Utica and as Kit recalls, "He didn't know a darned thing about the woods or anything. But he just loved it, and my father taught Earl quite a bit because that's all Earl wanted to do, hunting or trapping or guiding all the time. My mother, who ran a boardinghouse, wasn't too crazy about the idea of Earl and me guiding. She thought we were going to get shot or something."

Together, and sometimes separately, Kit and Earl met visitors from New York City and guided them into the mountains, mostly to hunt deer. The guide's job included driving the deer, cleaning it and carrying it out, a strenuous day's

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work. Being one of the very few female guides, and the only one for most clients, the sight of young Kit did take some customers by surprise. The men quickly appreciated her professionalism, especially when they got their buck. Many of the women in the parties, often highly educated world travelers, would ask questions, amazed at the idea of a woman making her living in such a way. “Oh, they would ask how I could think of doing it, and they would ask about how hard it was, and things like that. But we got so many repeat customers over the years that the parties were just used to me,” Kit says.

Deer drives were a common hunting-season task. “Earl and I would put our guests on watch with their guns, and then we would walk and walk and walk, and then we would start driving from different spots toward the hunting party. When we first started out driving the deer we would have to bark like a dog to scare them, and that was hard for me. Then we would walk and walk, driving them till we heard a shot or two, and that meant we got our guests a deer, which was the job, getting those folks a deer. And Earl and I, we were good at that.”

Though many hunters stayed at local lodges and hotels, Kit frequently had guests in her house. “We had so many clients that came back year after year; they were friends for us. Oh gosh, we had folks sleeping everywhere, on the floors, in the halls, the porch. It was great fun most of the time. They just wanted to hunt and we’d take ’em out in the morning every day for a week.”

Winter for many an Adirondack family was a time of deprivation and worry. In the 1930s, especially in the southern Adirondacks, the winter economy was nonexistent. For Kit, trapping was a way to make a living—especially once cold weather set in—and a way to enjoy being with Earl.

As a young wife, she learned how to set traps, how to scrape skins and dry and stretch the pelts for sale. “It’s a lot of work and a lot of hard work,” Kit muses. Drying skins took up quite a bit of space; there were drying racks on the porch, in the garage, in the house and in the attic. In spite of a likely statute of limitations 70 years later, Kit looks around suspiciously before she whispers, “When we would trap out of season, we used an old outhouse to dry skins.”

Running a household with three children and running traps every day was not only hard work but inevitably resulted in schedule conflicts. Kit was seen more than once in a nice dress chopping the ice on a pond with a hatchet to clear the way for a beaver trap. “We trapped all over. It was interesting; every trap was different. How to set it, where and for what animal—mink, muskrat or beaver. We got a dollar an inch for a 72-inch beaver skin, and that meant a lot to us then. Seventy-two dollars in the ’30s meant a whole lot to us.”

The partnership that Kit and Earl developed was based on economic survival, passion for the outdoors and love.

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The two of them spent many hours together in harsh conditions performing very difficult tasks.

"Sometimes I'd get on that ice and you could hear it crack, and I'd say, 'My God, Earl, we're goin' in!' And he'd just look at me and say real calm, 'No we ain't, that's just the ice crackin' from the freezin.' Earl was a real partner to me, very gentle and considerate. He was great at explaining things and he was very safe. I can hear him now as if it was yesterday."

Edie Morcy's father, O. C. (Orley) Tuttle, was an outstanding athlete and for a time held the national amateur cycling record for the mile. Once the personal guide of J. P. Morgan, Orley Tuttle's pedigree as an Adirondack guide is impressive. He led a little-known lawyer named Calvin Coolidge into the backwoods, and later, during World War II, he showed young members of the House of Windsor how to paddle a canoe.

"He taught me the most about the woods, hunting and fishing especially. He was a very kind man and a good teacher," Edie recalls. Gifted as a hunter and especially as a fishing guide, Orley Tuttle is perhaps now best remembered for his deer-hair masterpiece, the "Devil Bug." The lure became an international favorite and launched a lucrative cottage industry for the family. Mr. Tuttle's resumé contains another unguidely line of work: he once operated a dance studio in Utica, where he met his future wife, Lotti.

Educated in Boston, Lotti was an exceptional painter, writer and marketing director for the Devil Bug before the word "marketing" existed. More often than not she was in demand as a guide for the guests of the Bay View Hotel, which she operated with Orley. She not only learned from Orley the woodcrafts of hunting, fishing and trapping, but later incorporated them into her writing in advertising publications, trade journals and sporting magazines. Lotti was the first female guide ever licensed in New York State. Edie says of her parents, "No man knew the North Woods better than my father, and my mother was no less an authority. They were responsible for my love of the woods. I grew up thinking the Adirondacks was a paradise."

Life at the Bay View Hotel for Edie Tuttle was an idyllic training ground for a guide. The lodge, on Third Lake in the Fulton Chain, had a reputation as a prime destination for those who enjoyed what was called "a sporting life," active men and women who wanted to be called "sportsmen." Like many hotels of the time, it offered guide service along with room and board.

Accompanying her father on hunting and fishing outings with clients at an early age, Edie was taught the ethic of sportsmanship. She insists the idea is not so much competition but a mutual appreciation. "It is the joy of doing the sport well and with dignity. That the other person does well—catches a fish, gets a deer—if you are out together, that is something a true sportsman would enjoy just as much."

Together with her sister, Fern, Edie

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spent much of her girlhood in constant activity. There was much work to do at the hotel, but the Adirondacks were a fantastic playground too. Hiking, hunting, shooting, fishing—the girls were trained at an early age in woodcraft. Edie's fondness for the wilderness grew in high school, when she would invite her classmates from town to the family hunting camp, an abandoned lumber shanty on Third Lake Creek. "It was so much fun to bring the girls out there and we just had a great time. I've always loved showing people how to enjoy the outdoors," she says.

In their later teens, the Tuttle sisters would take a canoe trip through the backcountry every fall. These journeys, often to Long Lake and back, were 80 miles or more with several side trips. Lugging an 82-pound canvas canoe and equipment, the girls camped, fished and hiked. By the time they were in their 20s, they were adept at wilderness survival and naturally fit.

Edie is best remembered for jumping into the Fulton Chain long-distance swim race for women in 1929 without any training or preparation and completing the 14-hour journey from Inlet to Old Forge in second place against national competition. On Old Forge's town dock some 3,000 people awaited the arrival of the local girl who was covered in bear grease to protect her from the cold water. Her prize was a lot on Grey Lake and a lifetime membership in the Adirondack Country Club, where she was working as a secretary. Without bragging, Edie says, "I swam the distance by myself once before just to see if I could do it. So when the race came up I knew I could do it."

A licensed guide since the 1930s, Edie guided mostly for fishing. She went into the woods often, but guiding for her was always an act of love. "I would pack a lunch for everyone, row the boat out on the lake to do some trout fishing. If they wanted to stream fish, I would take them on trails through the woods to certain streams. I enjoyed seeing the tourists learn how to fish and master the art of fly casting." Edie received a life membership in the New York State Outdoor Guides Association in 1987.

Edie—who did so many things better than so many men—hardly seems to notice that aspect of competition. "I believe in sportsmanship, and that is to enjoy what you're doing. I never thought about beating men at something or catching more than they did. It never crossed my mind. I thought more about the beauty and joy of watching a trout rise to the fly."

Both Kit and Edie see their roles as women guides from interesting perspectives. Kit remembers her guiding work as not so much a woman doing a job that men did, but as a woman making a living and surviving. "You see, it shouldn't be so surprising. Women did so many hard, difficult jobs. They had to because they had to live as best as they could, and the Adirondacks at that time had only so many jobs for anyone. I was lucky because I enjoyed my jobs."

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The Future Is Wild

What will New Yorkers want for the Adirondack Park in 2038?

BY PHILIP TERRIE

Every 20 years or so voters are asked if they want to call a constitutional convention to reform how our state is governed, including how to interpret the concept of Article 14's Forever Wild.

In 2037, give or take a year or two, New York voters will be asked, as they are roughly every twenty years, whether they want to call a constitutional convention to reform the state's chief governance document. It will have been seventy years since a convention sat to write or revise our constitution, and it's impossible to predict how voters will lean. Such a convention is expensive, and there is always the chance that a new constitution will be no improvement over the last. But New York has never gone this long without a serious attempt to modernize its constitution. If voters approve, the usual pressing issues will present themselves to the delegates, whoever they are: the need to rationalize New York's baroque judiciary, how to fairly draw legislative and Congressional districts, the never-ending struggle between New York City and the rest of the state over power and the allocation of resources, and the efficient construction of a twenty-first-century welfare apparatus, among many others. But Article 14 will also draw significant attention. If the voters in November of 2037 give the nod to a convention, it will gather in Albany in the summer of 2038, with a statewide vote on a new constitution in November.

How will Article 14 be interpreted for a forest where a warming climate is driving changes of species composition, where boreal species living and reproducing for millennia may be unable to survive in a warmer regime, where dead snags are surrounded by the saplings of more southerly species moving north? As more and more winter precipitation falls as rain, will global warming eventually mean that our febrile debates and bitterly contested litigation about snowmobile trails will be irrelevant? Will enthusiasts for all-terrain vehicles, which have a far worse environmental impact than snowmobiles do and are currently banned in the Forest Preserve, lobby for access to snowmobile trails? Will skiing at Whiteface and Gore remain viable? Will there be opportunities for ice climbing? Will the delegates, including those sympathetic to the idea of wilderness as it has evolved in New York ever since the establishment of the Forest Preserve in 1885, conclude that the time has come for rethinking the whole concept? Adirondack wilderness has been protected and cherished for many reasons, and nearly all of its defenders have been grateful that those marks of human impact they could see around them were at least slowly disappearing. The encroaching forest erasing logging roads, the recovery of burned acreage, and the reforesting of farmland all meant the Adirondack land was healing itself and reverting to an ever more wild state. But how do we defend a wilderness doctrine when the signs of anthropogenic impact are moving in the opposite direction and becoming more pronounced every year?

Will the delegates, including those sympathetic to the idea of wilderness, conclude that the time has come for rethinking the whole concept?

At every convention since 1894—1915, 1938, and 1967—delegates have introduced proposals to open up the Forest Preserve to logging and intense recreational development, to turn the Forest Preserve into a multiple-use resource managed and exploited as the National Forests are. These have always been voted down. Will delegates in 2038 do the same? Equally important, now that it is beyond serious argument that the earth's atmosphere is warming and that weather patterns have begun to change and will continue to do so far into the distant future, will delegates consider the implications of climate change for New York's always fragile

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and beleaguered wilderness? Climate change is a fact and will put unprecedented demands on Forest Preserve Management.

The causes of climate change are now well known: the burning of fossil fuels, the energy-intense and methane-producing nature of industrial agriculture, and the clearing of vast expanses of forest, to name the most important. When we extract and then refine and burn fossil fuels—coal, oil, natural gas—we release carbon dioxide, methane, and other gasses that in the upper atmosphere act like a greenhouse and trap heat that otherwise would escape into space. When we clearcut forests, as we have massively done throughout the world, especially and more recently in Amazonia, Africa, Indonesia, New Guinea, and pretty much wherever those forests persist, we make the greenhouse problem worse because those billions of trees could have captured some of the carbon through photosynthesis and thus diminished the warming effect. The capacity of living trees to absorb and then hold some of the atmospheric carbon is important to how we ponder the future of the Forest Preserve in our corner of a warming planet.

Understanding the details of all this, especially for those of us not trained as scientists, is an ongoing and imprecise process. Scientists who study atmospheric chemistry, meteorology, paleoclimatology, wildlife management, and silviculture, among others, still debate, often furiously, some finer points around the edges of the discussion, and the effects of all this vary and will vary from region to region. But the consensus is painfully clear: our planet is warming, and we are in large part responsible. The literature accessible to nonscientists has grown immensely in the last few decades, and it's impossible to read and digest it all. Some of the writers who have clarified my thinking include Bill McKibben and Curt Stager, along with Elizabeth Kolbert and Michael Mann.

What does the advent of dramatic climate change mean for the wilderness of the Forest Preserve, which so many of us continue to value? I've noted how easy it

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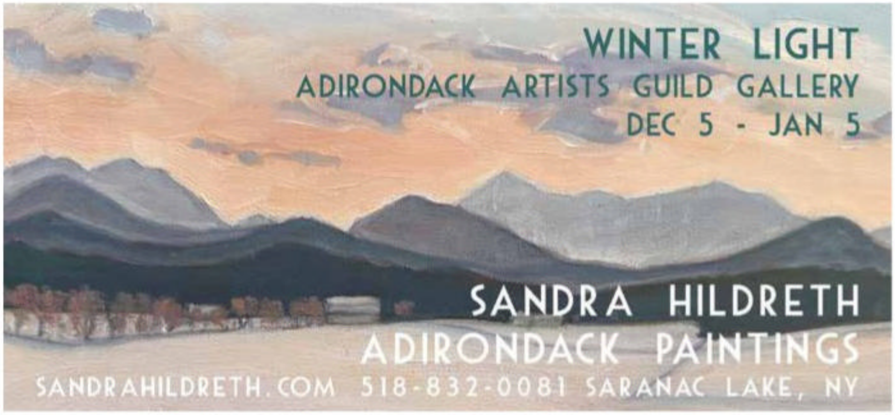
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is for me and others to minimize or even ignore the evidence of human impacts on our wilderness: ancient tote roads in the Sewards, for example. Will we be able to do this when we see increasing numbers of dead trees and the disappearance of species unable to adapt to changing climate? No one knows for certain how these changes in the wilderness will manifest or when and to what extent they will occur. Will they be so gradual that we don't notice? Or will they be sudden and dramatic?

Will those who cherish Article 14 and what it has meant for wilderness in the Forest Preserve keep quiet? Given how well Article 14 has served us up until now, I argue for leaving it alone. It's an all-too-certain sign of anthropocentric hubris to assume that a problem that we have created through our manipulation of natural systems, intended or not, can somehow be ameliorated through further manipulation of that same system.

Whatever the visible impact of climate change on the Forest Preserve, it's important to note the importance of an intact forest. Every year, most trees absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. This is called sequestration. Once that captured carbon is in the tree, it is stored and thus does not contribute to the greenhouse effect. Scientists who study trees and all that they do disagree on exactly how much carbon is withdrawn from the atmosphere, which species and ages do the best job, and how much is stored and for how long, but there is no doubt that the Adirondack Forest Preserve is doing important work and that preventing further loss of intact forests—in the Adirondacks, throughout the state, and around the world—is essential. No discussion of Article 14 should proceed without serious consideration of how it promotes the sequestration and storage of carbon, or of how such a forest can serve as a refuge for species pushed north by warming and fragmented habitat.

Excerpt from *Wild Forest Lands: Finding History and Meaning in the Adirondacks* by Philip G. Terrie. Copyright 2025. Syracuse University Press.

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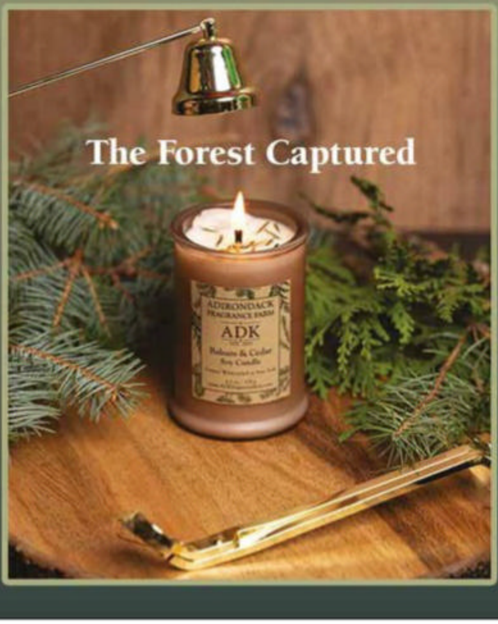

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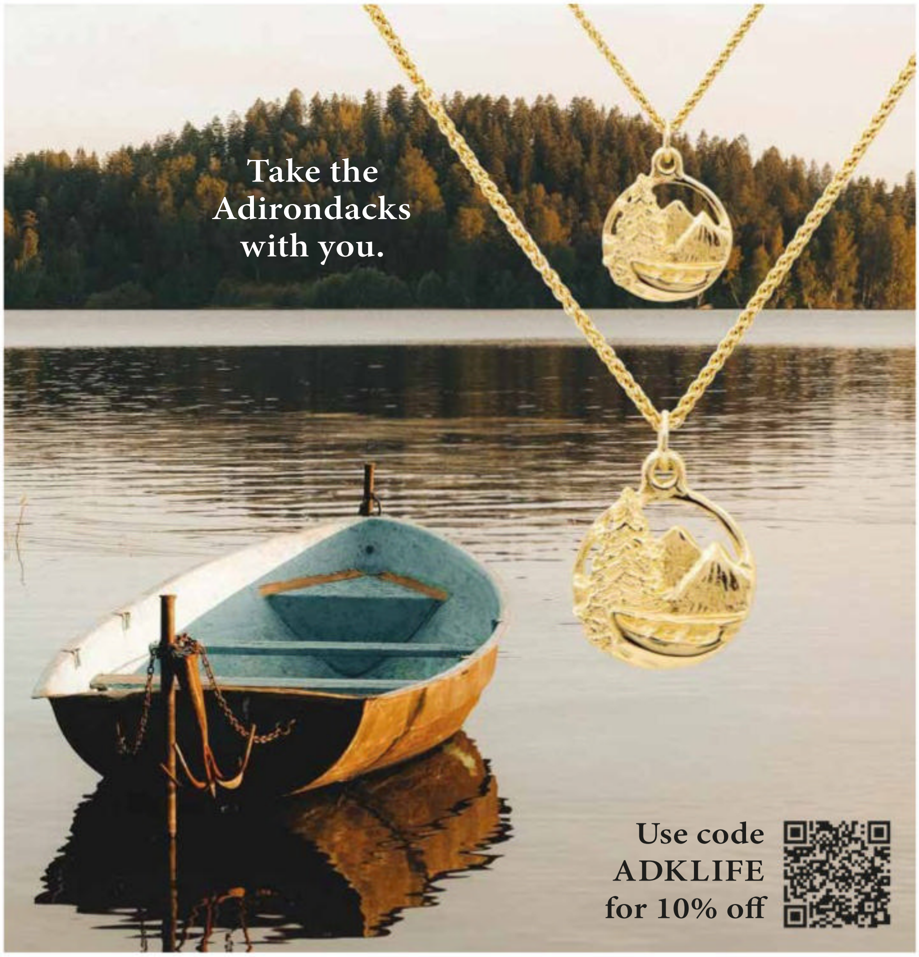
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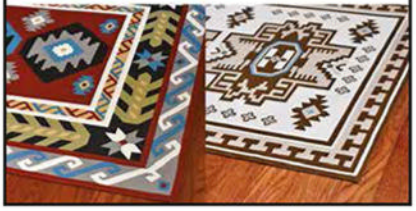

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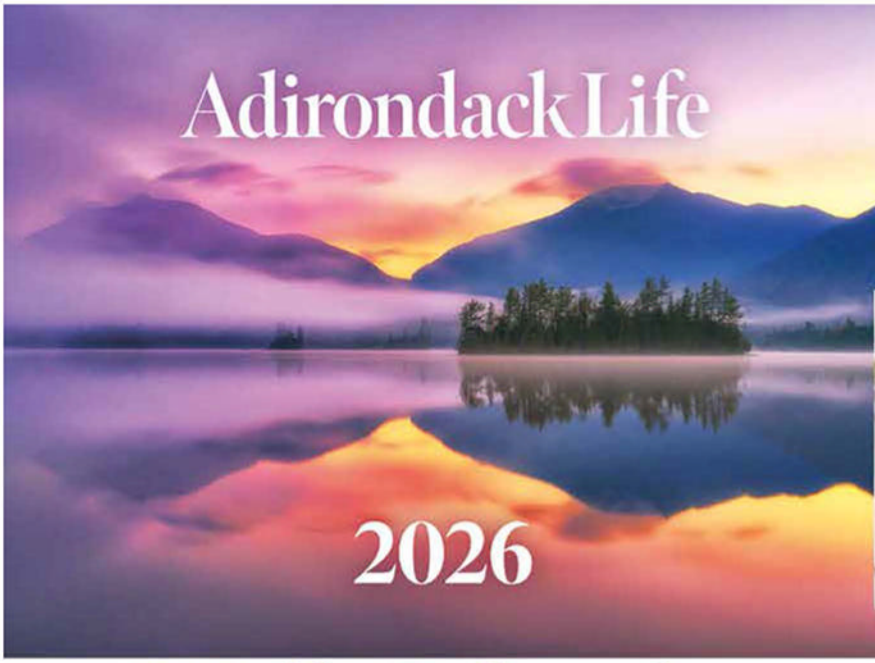
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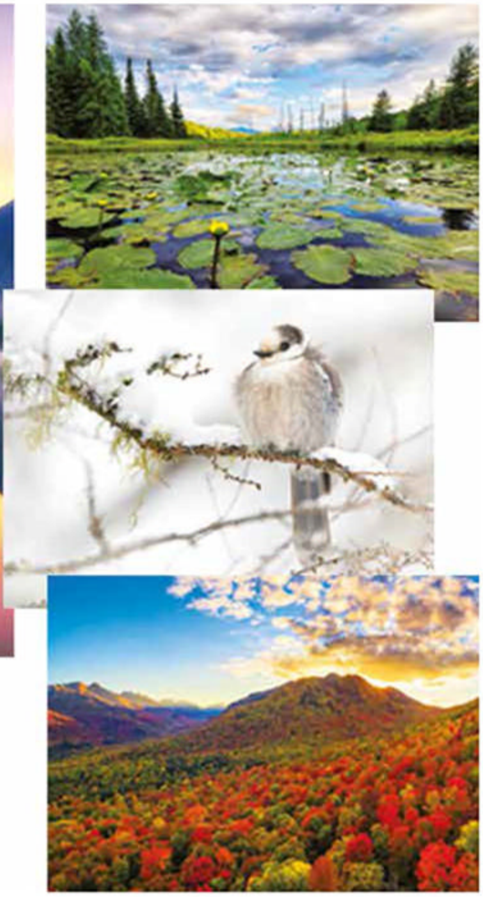

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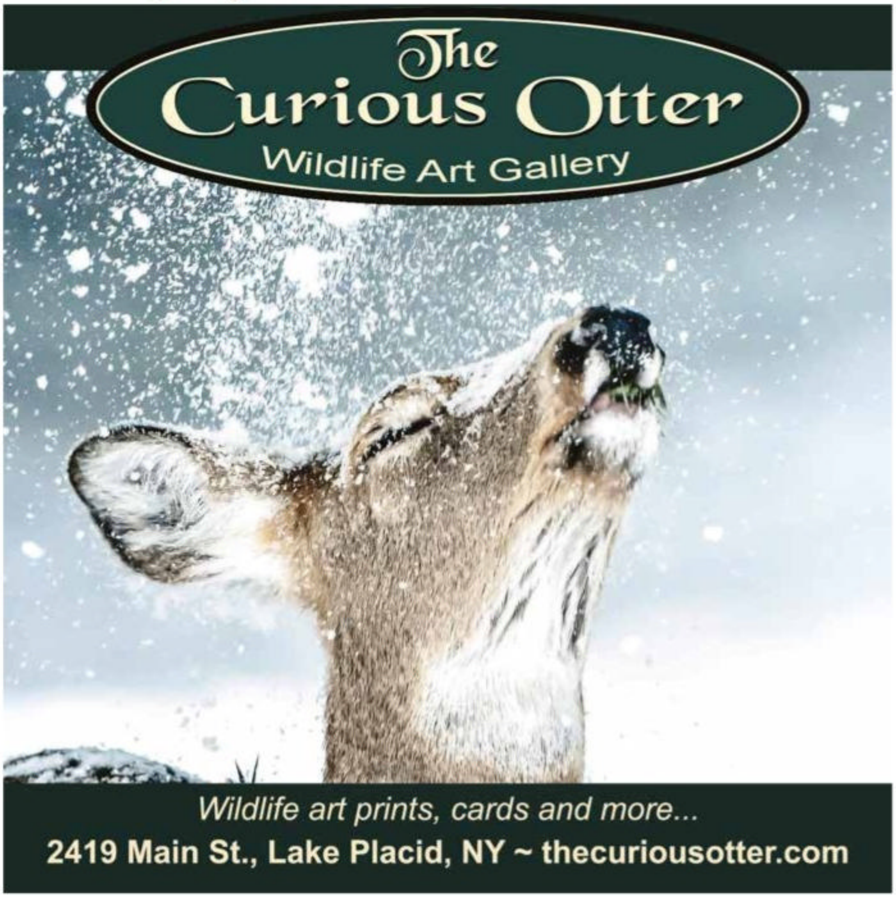
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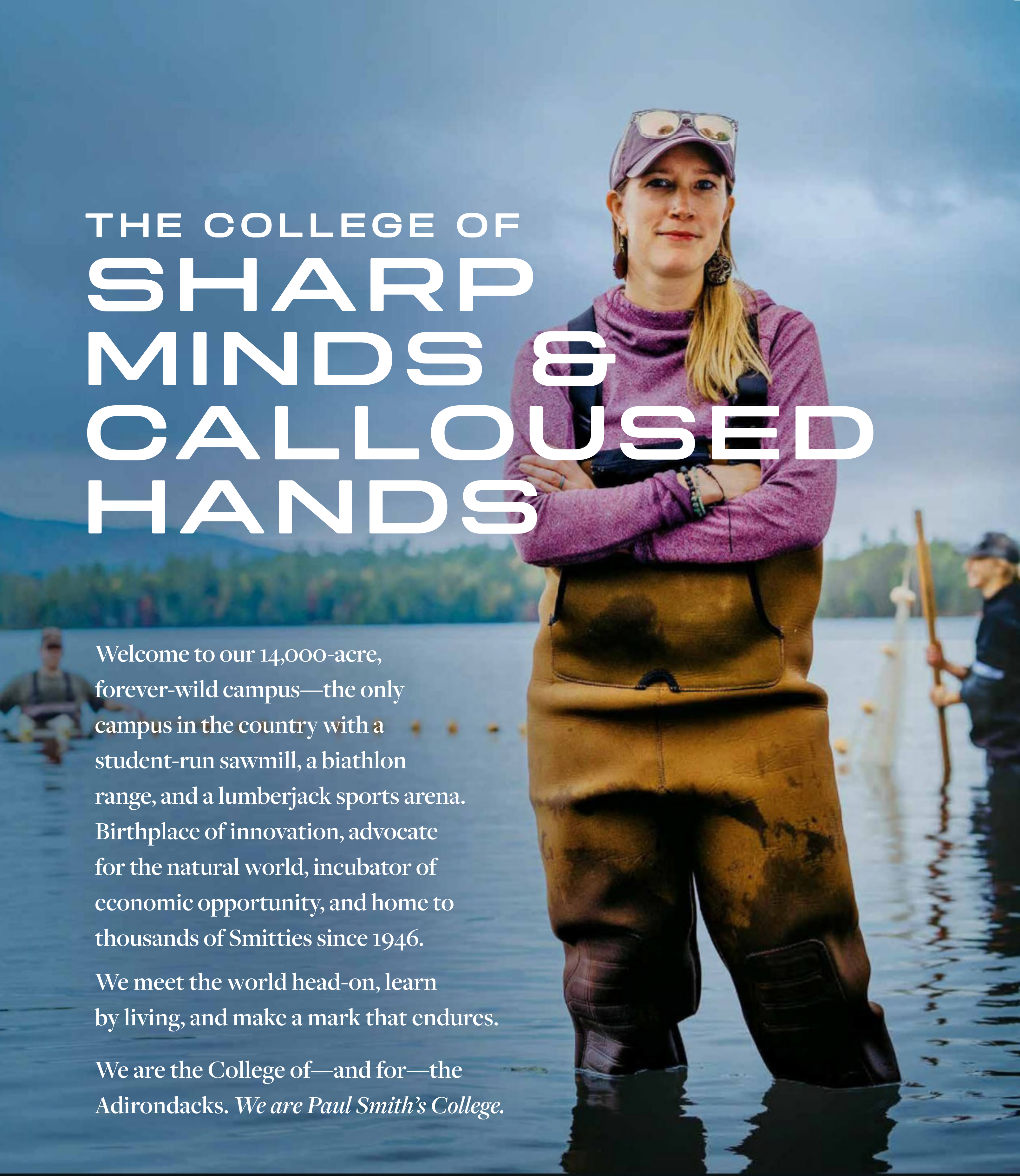

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Bootleg Venison

Going undercover to feed the family

BY SUSAN PACEK

One day Dad's luck nearly ran out. Someone tipped off the game warden.

My boots were still damp from that afternoon's chores when I slipped them on again, sighing loud enough to earn a sharp look from my mother. It was 1954, and I was 12 years old—one of eight children growing up in a small, weathered house in Paul Smiths, deep in the Adirondacks. Raising a family of our size on a single income wasn't easy, and I knew better than to complain, especially on nights like this.

It was past 9:30 p.m., long after bedtime, but sleep wasn't on the schedule. Tonight, we were picking up dinner.

With a clap of her hands, Mom signaled it was time. My siblings and I piled into the back of our 1953 Ford, crowding close for warmth, the vinyl seats cold against our legs. We drove in silence, my brother's sharp pinch to my arm breaking the stillness—and earning me another withering look when I yelped. I bit my lip and watched the blackness of the Adirondack woods slide by outside the window.

When we reached Rockefeller Park, the headlights clicked off. The car slowed to a crawl, then eased down a familiar dirt road, the trees overhead glowing softly in the moonlight. The tires crunched on gravel, and the only sound was the quiet *purr* of the engine.

Then—a *thud*. The car jolted forward. No one spoke. My brother opened the side door, and we waited.

Seconds later, a dark figure leapt from the woods and dove inside, landing flat on the floor at our feet.

Dad.

I giggled as I curled my legs up to avoid kicking him in the head. My brother shut the door, and Mom didn't hesitate—she hit the gas and drove us back toward the main road. The headlights came on as we turned out of the park and pointed toward home.

"Up to bed, all of you," Mom called as

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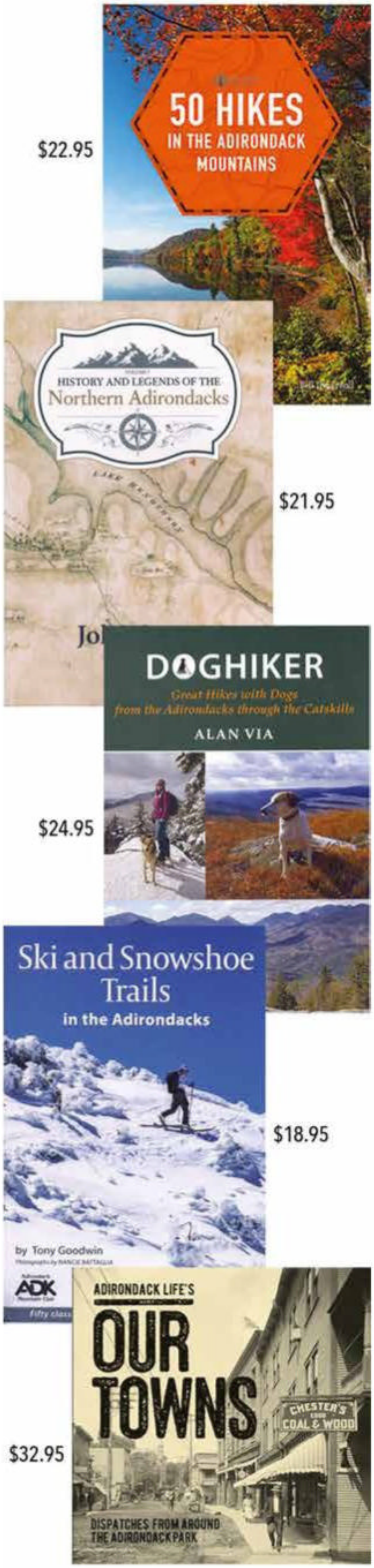
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we pulled into the drive.

From the upstairs window, I watched as Dad, under the same moon that had lit our path through the forest, began skinning the deer that would feed us for the next few weeks.

We all knew it was illegal—hunting out of season. But we also knew that without those deer, we wouldn't eat. That's why we stayed out of sight whenever Paul, the local game warden, came around.

"Just a social visit, Mr. Sawyer," he'd say with a grin.

Paul and Dad had served in the war together. They played cards sometimes at the American Legion Hall, shared drinks, shared stories—but Paul never let friendship interfere with the law. He'd caught others for "jacking"—night hunting—and Dad knew he wasn't immune. Especially after he bailed out a neighbor who got caught doing the same thing.

One day, Dad's luck nearly ran out.

It was a chilly August afternoon when word came that Paul was on his way—and this time, he had proof. Someone had tipped him off. Maybe someone holding a grudge. Dad wasn't always the easiest man to get along with, and he certainly had his share of enemies.

I watched from the hallway as Dad and my older brothers rushed to the freezer. The venison—pounds of it—was hauled out and carried upstairs, straight to my parents' bedroom. Mom was already in bed.

"Mom?" I asked. "What are you doing?"

"Not now, Laura," she said, voice low and firm.

It wasn't a tone you questioned.

"Get out of my way, Laura," one of my brothers barked, and I scrambled aside.

From the doorway, I watched as Dad tucked every last package of frozen venison under the covers, right up against my mother, who pulled the blankets tight.

A car crunched into the drive.

We scattered.

"Go sit down, kids," Dad said, calm now, smoothing his shirt as he headed for the front door.

"Afternoon, Glen," Paul said. "I'm here on official business today."

"I don't reckon I know what you mean," Dad replied coolly.

"I need to search your home. We've received a report."

Dad stepped back, holding the door open.

"Well, come on in, Warden. You're welcome to look."

We bolted back upstairs.

There was Mom, still lying in bed, eyes closed as if nothing at all were unusual. I crept closer. "What did I tell you kids?" she hissed, not opening her eyes. "Out!"

We were halfway to the door when Dad and the warden stepped into the room. Paul paused. His gaze lingered on Mom under the heavy blankets. He said nothing at first.

Then: "You know, Mrs. Sawyer, if you're helping your husband break the law, you're just as guilty as he is."

Mom's eyes fluttered open. "Well, I wouldn't know about that. I've been feeling poorly. Just came up to lie down a bit."

Silence.

Then Paul turned. He checked the rest of the house, the outbuildings. Nothing.

We waited.

Eventually, we heard the front door shut, then the warden's car tires squealing as he sped back down the drive.

Only then did we burst out laughing.

We laughed because we knew that no warden, no matter how determined, was going to lift the blankets on another man's wife. And for now, our secret—and our dinner—was safe.

The author Susan Pacek's family includes some of the Adirondacks' original homesteaders; her great-great-grandfather, Moses Sawyer, was a hunting guide for young Theodore Roosevelt, who memorialized him in the 1905 *Outdoor Pastimes of an American Hunter* and other books.

This story is based on true events from Pacek's mother's childhood in Paul Smiths. Though some dialogue and detail have been added for storytelling, the heart of the story remains true. It is told from her mother's point of view as a 12-year-old in 1954.

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Michael Frenette

The master craftsman and genial hermit of Tupper Lake

BY PETER ECKHARDT

Frenette at Great Camp Santanoni, an Adirondack landmark that he spent 20 years carefully restoring.

MICHAEL FRENETTE AT GREAT CAMP SANTANONI PHOTOGRAPH BY NANCIE BATTAGLIA

Frenette is a celebrated name in the Adirondacks. Michael Frenette's father, James, served on the Adirondack Park Agency's board for more than a decade, and Tupper Lake has a ski-trail system named after him. Michael's brother Robbie builds guideboats and runs Raquette River Outfitters outside of town. Even the "skyline" of Tupper Lake can be traced to the Frenettes: the Oval Wood Dish factory, with its lonely smokestack, was founded in 1918 by his mother Susanne's family.

Michael has held his own in his prominent family. In 2017, he oversaw the deconstruction of Anne LaBastille's Twitchell Lake cabin and its relocation to Adirondack Experience, in Blue Mountain Lake. He spent two decades restoring Great Camp Santanoni, in Newcomb, winning both New York State and Adirondack Architectural Heritage (AARCH) preservation awards for his work. He mentored students for 20 years, as the woodworking instructor for St. Lawrence University's Adirondack Semester.

"You don't see a lot of people who live like him anymore," says Emily Gougelet, a St. Lawrence graduate. "He calls himself a 'social hermit,'" says John Bernhardt, another protege and teacher at Lake Placid's Northwood School. "Incorrigible," laughs Chloe Mattilio, an ecologist and Frenette's co-contractor in the LaBastille project.

The Tupper Laker's artful woodworking is ubiquitous throughout the Blue Line and his homemade "Rustick AF" stickers are found on the laptops and cars of former students across the Northeast. A recluse, a genius, and genial misanthrope, Frenette is the truest living example of the Adirondacks' long tradition of hermits.

"I was born in the woods and I'll live in the woods forever," says Frenette. Like any good hermit, he lives on a sprawling compound built entirely by hand. He bought the land when he was 19, after a bout with meningioma and surgery to remove a brain tumor. No longer believing traditional education was the right path for him, Frenette dropped out of Paul Smith's College and began building his log cabin. His mother painted him a sign to hang over the door: "The Hermit of Raquette River."

It was an apt title. Like North Lake hermit Kettle Jones, Frenette developed relationships with the wildlife that frequented his property. Unlike some of these men, Frenette maintained a strong appetite for work: after the cabin, Frenette kept building.

He'd discovered woodworking after his brain surgery, when he was offered a job as summer caretaker at the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Duck Hole outpost. Between building trails and chatting with hikers, Frenette picked up carpentry to improve his living space. He then spent 13 years as the caretaker at Raquette Falls. ("I had to rescue myself once—I fell off a cliff and broke my pelvis and a bunch of ribs. I had to walk with a cane for a month.") Somewhere in the mix, Frenette spent a season running sled dogs outside of Willow, Alaska. Back in the Adirondacks, Frenette built his own sled and team of dogs.

During his years at Raquette Falls, Frenette passed some winters as caretaker at Lake Colden, which is one of the major access points to Marcy, Algonquin and Iroquois. As caretaker, Frenette was the main contact for search and rescues. His dog sled helped.

"I got a call from Jackie, the DEC dispatcher. There was a kid in a lean-to who hadn't eaten in three days." After dispatch radioed Frenette about the situation, he hitched his team to his sled and mushed to the lean-to.

"I put the kid in a sleeping bag and there was a full moon shining bright. … I tilted his head back and said, 'Kid, you stay in there!' He goes, 'This is so cool!'"

While this may have been the first dog-sled rescue in the High Peaks, it wasn't Frenette's last dog-sled adventure. At the end of one of his seasons

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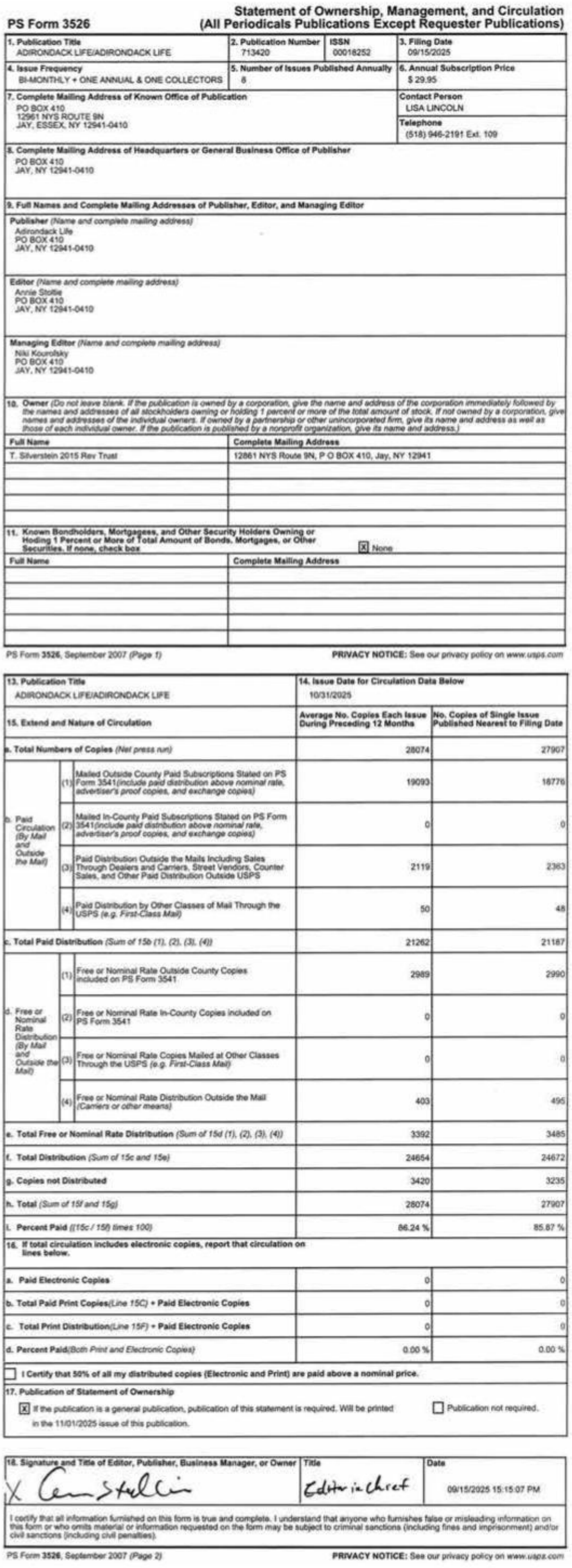

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as winter caretaker, water began to pool on top of Lake Colden. "I like to sew, and I was making a quilt at Lake Colden. I wanted to finish it before I left. The night before my last day, the lake was frozen. I stayed up most of the night trying to finish the quilt and I finally got it done way later in the day than I wanted. When I got to the lake, there were six inches of water on it. I knew that Avalanche Lake freezes really hard and that the water was run-off from cliffs. The dogs didn't wanna go, but I wanted to go across the lake rather than take the sled apart and walk the dogs. So I sled across, and at the end of the lake, there's this guy standing there, taking pictures. I get to the edge of the lake and this guy goes, 'Until now, I thought only God could walk on water!'"

At his sprawling compound, built entirely by hand, Frenette has grown into his reputation as a talented, solitary, quasi-mystical woodworker.

Frenette eventually left his state-sponsored hermitude, but between trips abroad, he continued to work on his camp. In his early 30s, he followed his love of woodworking to the North Bennet Street School, in Boston, where he fine-tuned it into the skill of a master craftsman. Along the way, an old girlfriend gave him a new appellation: "Gnome."

The name stuck and, back home with the toad that lived in his sink and the squirrels and chipmunks running in and out of his house, Frenette grew into his reputation as the talented, solitary, quasi-mystical woodworker on Paskungameh Road. In 1996, he was selected as the sole American representative to attend an international wood preservation course in Norway. Upon returning, he was contacted by Steven Engelhart, then executive director of AARCH, and began what was to be 20 years restoring Great Camp Santanoni.

Santanoni, the turn-of-the-20th-century retreat of Albany-based banker Robert Pruyn and his wife, Anna, had been transferred to New York State in 1972. The complex was allowed to decompose until the early 1990s, when the newly formed AARCH partnered with the state to preserve the site. As a result of the decay, Engelhart needed a master carpenter. He found one in Frenette, who was hired as Santanoni's "builder-in-residence."

In that role, Frenette restored and maintained portions of three building sites on the compound: the gate lodge complex, the main camp, and the farm complex. Using the skills he'd picked up in Norway and Boston, as well as his own natural gifts, Frenette helped restore a major part of Adirondack architectural history.

After a lifetime spent in the woods, in 2024 Frenette was looking forward to his 66th birthday, and for a special reason. On April 8th, over a hundred people converged at his homestead to celebrate the craftsman and to watch the solar eclipse. "All walks of life, all different backgrounds, people from Santanoni and the Adirondack Semester and Tupper Lake were stopping by. There were people from all across the country," says former student John Bernhardt.

Frenette still lives at his compound outside of Tupper. After a stroke in 2015 and another in 2022, he's relied more on the community he's also built. Former students visit weekly to help with chores and keep him company, and neighbors visit with meals and wood. His father walks over to deliver his mail, and the two spend some evenings with a pair of Utica Club longnecks. "I like talking to people," says Frenette, "I'm a proud Adirondacker."

This is not the whole story of Michael Frenette—not by a long shot. To hear about the time he sheltered from an avalanche in a Utah mineshaft, or his ascents of mountains in Ecuador, Pakistan and Europe, or his arguments for the adoption of bidets, you'll have to ask him yourself. For now, he offers a final Frenette-ism: "Planning anything is an invitation to failure. If it flows, enjoy." ▲

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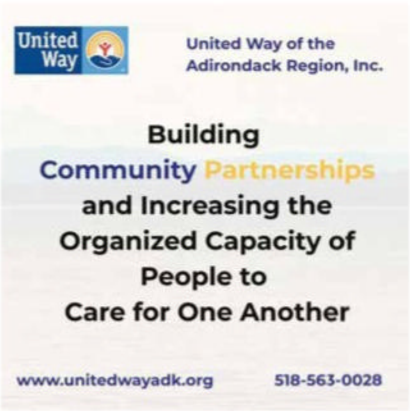
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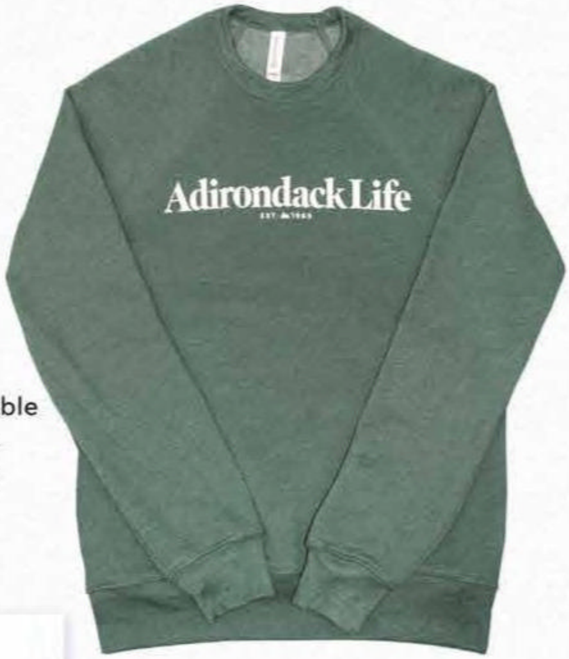
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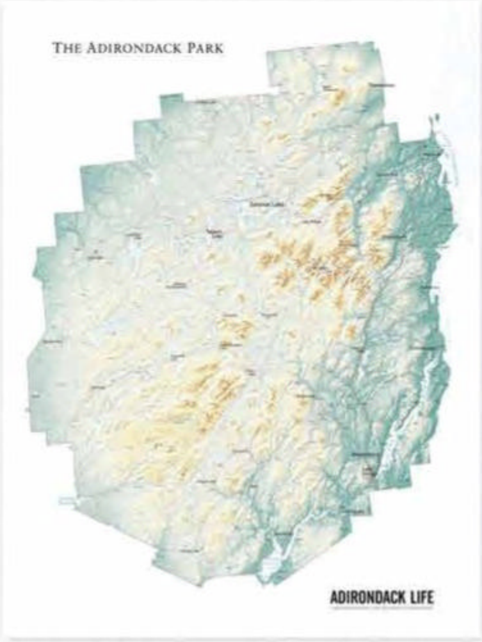
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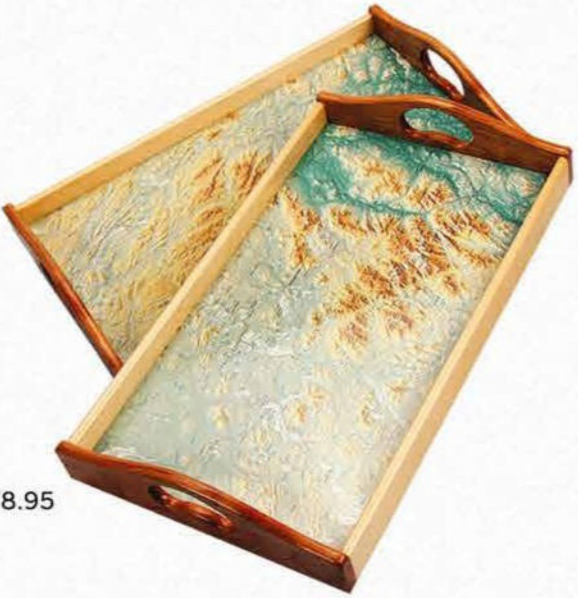

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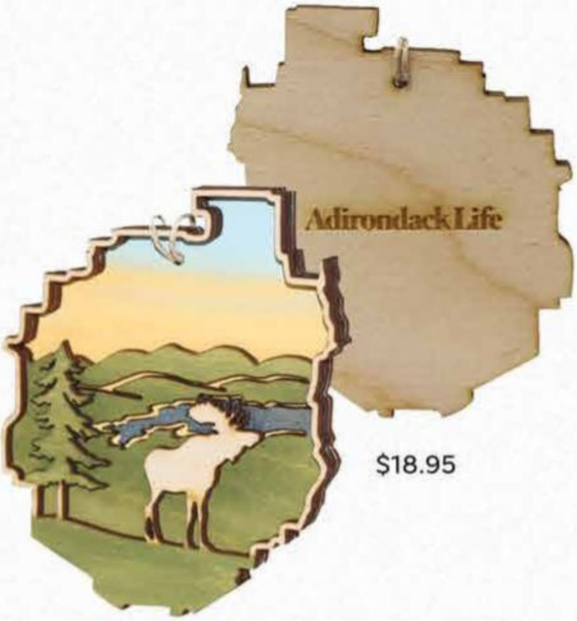
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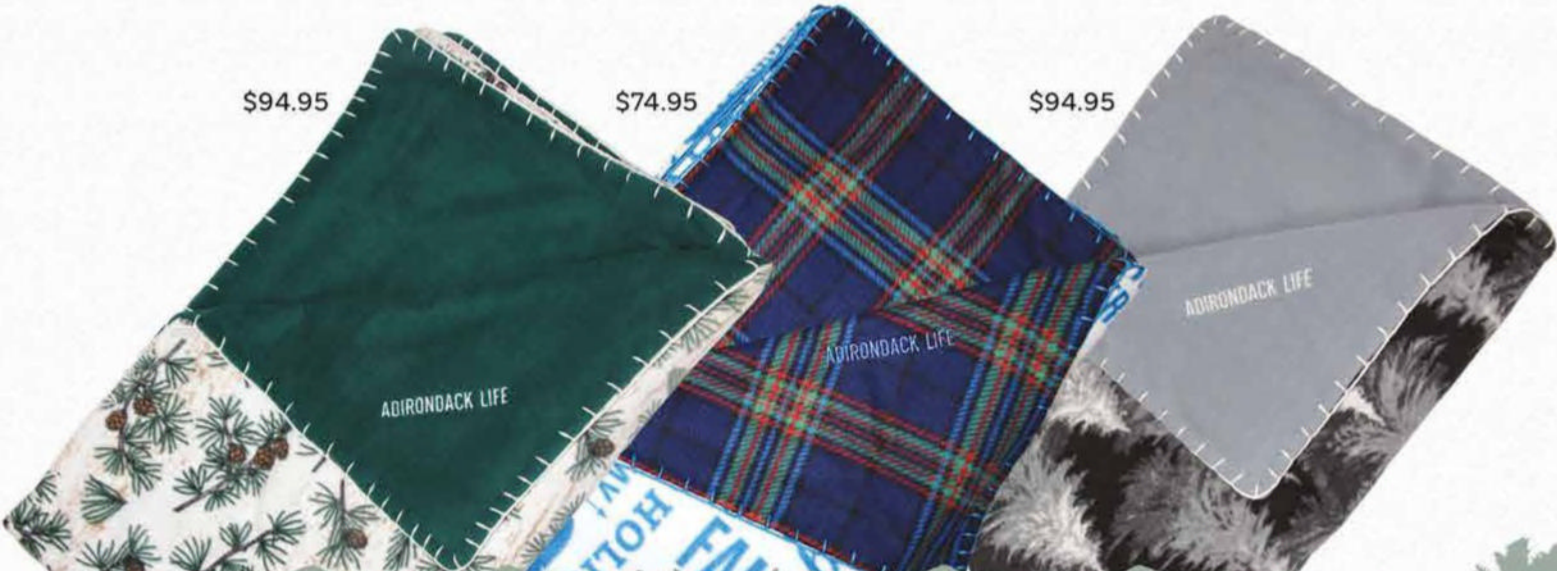
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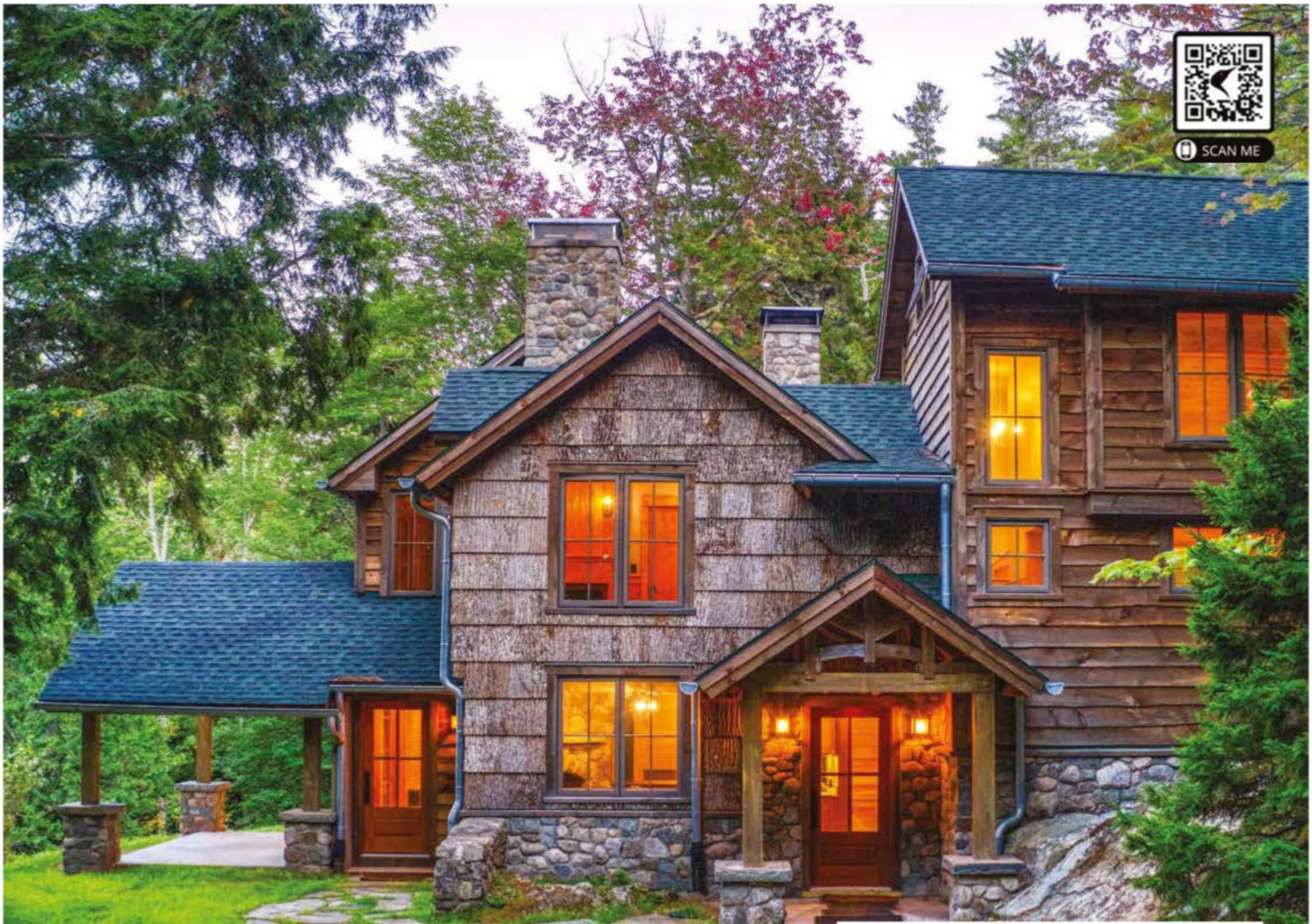
This year's Santa Sunday happens December 14, during Lake Placid's Holiday Village Stroll weekend. Learn more at whiteface.com.



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